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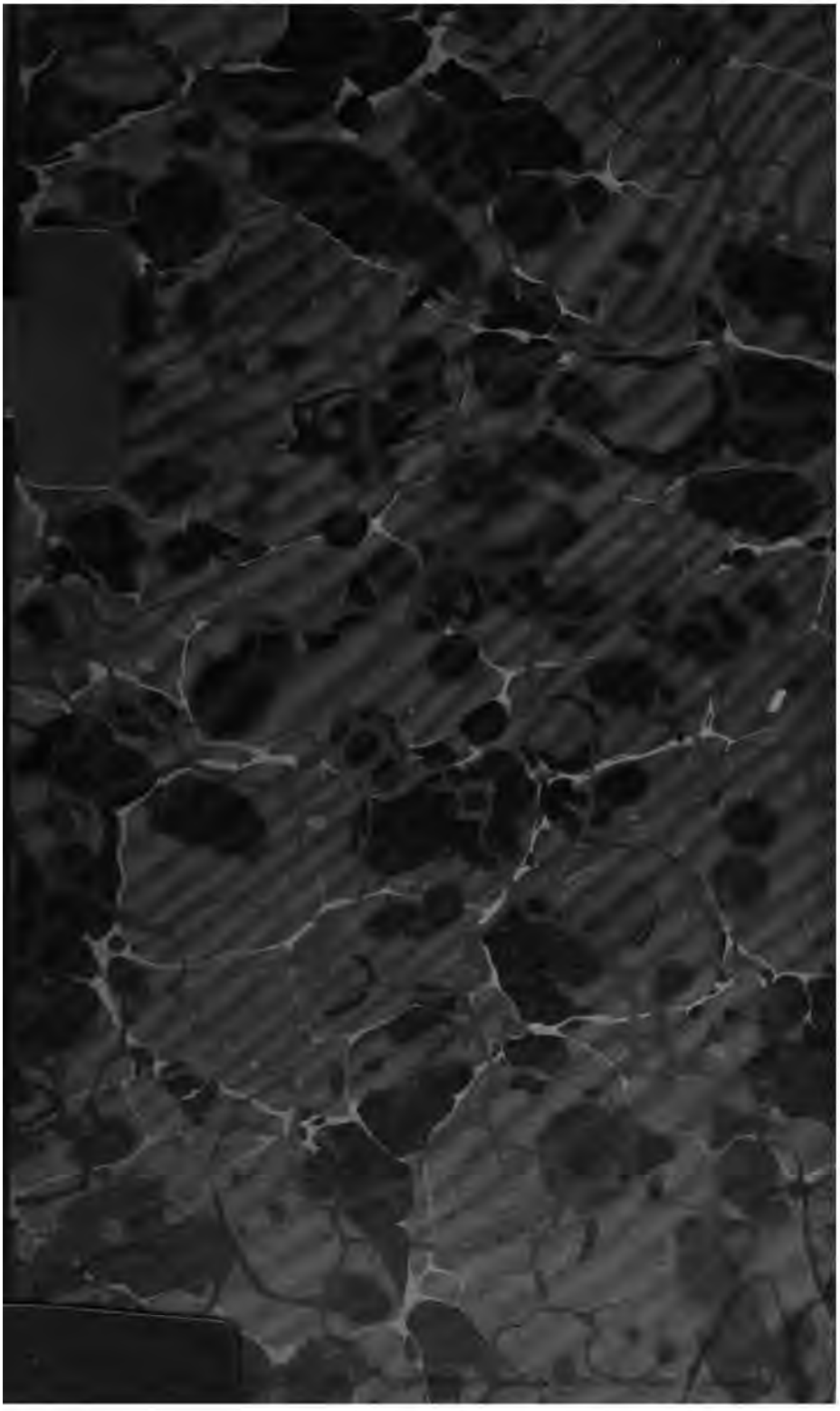

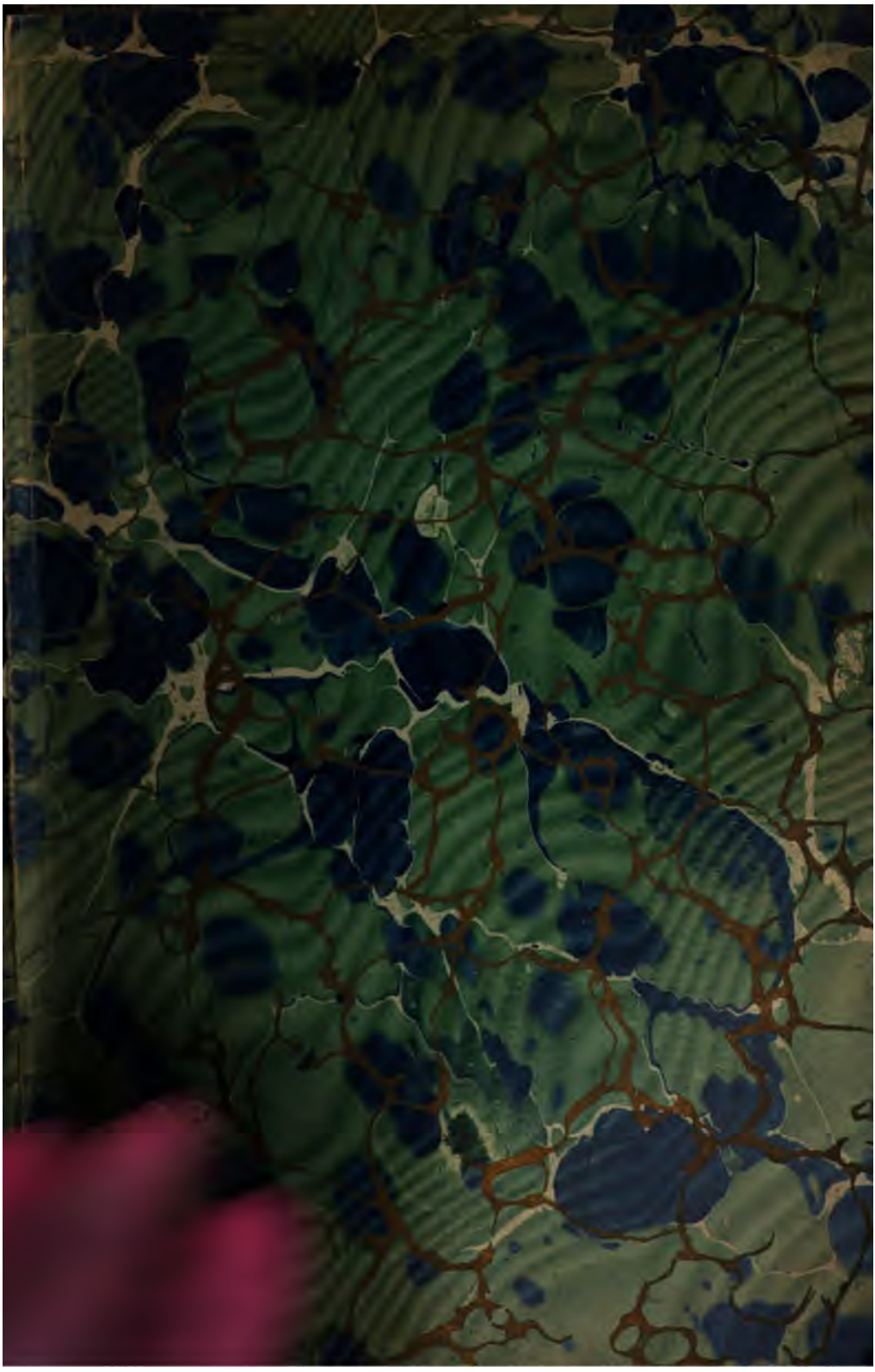

S. W. Brewster.
Capt.. U. S. M. C.

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Dubourg drew from his basket his mechanical syringe, which he had filled with Barège water.

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY W. GLACKENS.

The Works of

CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

With a General Introduction by

JULES CLARETIE

SISTER ANNE

Translated into English by

MARY HANFORD FORD

VOLUME II

THE FREDERICK J. QUINBY COMPANY

BOSTON LONDON PARIS

Edition

Limited to One Thousand Copies

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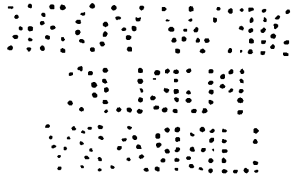

CONTENTS
VOLUME II

CHAPTER I

The Comedy and its Results 1

CHAPTER II

The Pleasures of Love Last only a Moment; the Sorrows of Love Endure for a Lifetime . . 21

CHAPTER III

The Big Beast 32

CHAPTER IV

Illusions of the Heart. Inconstancy and Fidelity 55

CHAPTER V

Lunel, Dubourg and Madelon 78

CHAPTER VI

Love is Always the Strongest. 93

CHAPTER VII

Death of Marguerite. Sister Anne Leaves Her Cottage 124

CHAPTER VIII

The Travels of Sister Anne. The Forest . . . 141

38X487

CONTENTS

CHAPTER IX

PAGE

The Stranger 169

CHAPTER X

They Are Married 190

CHAPTER XI

Sister Anne Becomes a Mother. A Long Sojourn at the Farm 206

CHAPTER XII

The Diligence. Sister Anne at Paris 218

CHAPTER XIII

The Fateful Meeting 238

CHAPTER XIV

The Arrival of Dubourg. The Storm Gathers . 261

CHAPTER XV

The Return of Frederic. Constance and Sister Anne 284

CHAPTER XVI

The Catastrophe 312

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS
VOLUME II

DUBOURG DREW FROM HIS BASKET HIS MECHANICAL SYRINGE, WHICH HE HAD FILLED WITH BARÈGE WATER. (See page 86.) . . Frontispiece

Photogravure from original drawing by W. Glackens.

PAGE

LATOUCHE CLIMBED A TREE, BERTRAND KNOCKED OVER THE MAYOR, THE MOST AGILE JUMPED OVER THE HEDGE, AND THE HEAVIEST CRAWLED UNDERNEATH IN TRYING TO GET AWAY 43

Photogravure from original drawing by E. Boyd Smith.

THE LOVELY GIRL EXTENDED HER HAND TO FREDERIC. HE FELL AT HER KNEES AND COVERED IT WITH KISSES 122

Photogravure from original drawing by Albert de Ford Pitney.

SHE RAN AND THREW HERSELF INTO HIS ARMS, AND FAINTED AS SHE POINTED TO HER BOY 289

Photogravure from original drawing by Walter Russell.

CHAPTER I

The Comedy and its Results

On awakening the next morning poor Ménard could not realize that he was to play Theseus; but Dubourg came to him, with a book of the play in his hand, and pointed out the rôle that had been assigned to the tutor. The little manager had sent it over first thing in the morning, with the information that a first rehearsal of the entire company would be held promptly at midday.

"Come," said Dubourg, "the rôle consists of less than a hundred lines, and what is that to a man like you, who has learned Horace and Virgil by heart, as well as a great deal from many other authors."

"That is very true, but then I have passed the better part of my life in learning those things; and I have only three days in which to learn this rôle."

"Don't be afraid, I'll warrant you can do it; besides, there will be a prompter," added M. Dubourg.

"Good enough," said the timorous Ménard, "that will be my salvation."

"Be sure you know your entrance lines; that's all that's necessary."

"Oh, I'll answer for that; I know them now:—

"Fortune hath ceased my vows t' antagonize,
Madame, and in thine arms doth place—"

"Bravo! You say them like an angel!"

"I feel anxious about the curse, though."

"Oh, if you make the gestures all right, the rest will take care of itself."

At noon M. Floridor came to conduct the gentlemen to the theatre, where the remainder of the company awaited them. The sight of the little hall amused Dubourg exceedingly; it was reached through the dovecot, which had been utilized as a box office. Ménard came to grief immediately against the two old casks that were to serve as mountain scenery.

The troupe showed great respect for the two newcomers, although they read the rôle from the manuscript. Dubourg could scarcely open his mouth without hearing the others exclaim,—

"How well he reads! What talent!"

It was the same with Ménard. The tutor was amazed at the applause which was showered upon him, and wondered if he had really possessed a latent talent for the theatre.

"Do you take snuff while the scene is on?" said Floridor, addressing Ménard.

"Why not?" he replied. "I play a king, and

"The King of Prussia took a great deal of it, as this box testifies."

"In Poland," remarked Dubourg, coming to M. Ménard's assistance, "we take anything that pleases us while the scene is on. It is the accepted thing, and quite according to tradition in many rôles."

"Oh, how very nice that is!" exclaimed the watchman's wife, who was to enact the character of Phèdre," and I should never have dared to take a pinch while playing the princess."

"That being the case," said the journeyman carpenter, "I'll venture to slip a little quid into my mouth when I am taking the part of Aricie, since M. Boleslas thinks it allowable."

"Do anything that pleases you. Great talent excuses a thousand follies."

"Non est magnum ingenium sine mixtura dementiæ," said Ménard.

"Do you hear? He's talking Polish," said the theatrical manager to his artists.

The three following days passed in rehearsing, but at length the date of the first public performance arrived. Ménard knew nothing by heart but his opening speech, in which, however, he was admirably proficient, and Dubourg assured him that that would be sufficient. Boleslas himself did not remember a word of his rôle, but that did not disturb him in the least.

The morning of the performance he took pains

to get his hundred francs in advance; he told M. Floridor that Polish actors were always paid in this way. The little director counted out the sum without delay, and Dubourg put it in his pocket. The costumes to be used in "Phèdre" were brought to the inn.

"But don't we dress at the theatre?" asked Dubourg.

"We haven't dressing-rooms yet," replied M. Floridor, "so everyone dresses at home; but as the weather is fine that causes no inconvenience."

"Then I shall have to go through the streets as Hippolyte?"

"The theatre is only two steps from your inn, and you can play this rôle in boots, for Hippolyte is a hunter."

"That's true."

"We haven't any bow, so we shall be obliged to use an old musket, which I will bring you; the ramrod will do for arrows."

"That's all right."

"I am sure you will like the wig. Hippolyte should have his hair falling in ringlets about his neck; so I have made some alterations in a Louis XIV wig, and it is exactly the thing."

After the director had gone Dubourg dressed himself with the aid of Ménard. The tutor did not appear until the third act, and so had plenty of time to make his own toilet. Dubourg kept on his black trousers, for the hundred francs were in

the pockets; and he preferred to have the money about him, not knowing what might happen. He pulled over these a pair of wide nankeen breeches, put on a white piqué waistcoat, and threw over his shoulders the large mantle covered with rabbits' fur, which represented the tiger's skin. The perruque completed this toilet. He daubed his face with rouge, took the gun in one hand and his handkerchief in the other, and started for the theatre. He urged Ménard to hasten, so that he would not be late at his entrance.

The hall was full, which should make the receipts about eighty francs. Floridor was in a state of ecstasy. He ran from his box under the stage, and from the stage back to his box, in full view of the audience. There was no way of passing under the stage, and the cloth which served as a curtain was hung on a rod and drawn to the side, like the curtain of a magic lantern.

Dubourg arrived dripping with perspiration, because the rabbit-skin mantle was very heavy, and the perruque was enormous. The comedians uttered a cry of admiration as they saw him enter.

"Oh, isn't he handsome!" they exclaimed on all sides.

"Doesn't he make a splendid Hippolyte!"

"Oh, I shall play Phèdre from inspiration!" said the watchman's wife, who cast very ardent glances at Dubourg.

As Phèdre unfortunately squinted a little, and had an enormous nose full of snuff, Hippolyte did not respond to her loving glances. He went forward to draw the curtain, and look into the hall. The moment his head became visible a cry arose on all sides. The ladies believed they had seen a lion. Floridor ran from his box and, turning toward the audience, exclaimed, "I told you truly you would be ravished and enchanted!" He began to applaud with all his might, the spectators in the front rows following his example. Dubourg saluted the audience with his most noble air and retired behind the curtain.

Everybody was ready at last. Phèdre wore a Mary Stuart gown, a most foolish bonnet, and black patches innumerable, even on her nose. Œnone had dressed in red and black to give herself a dangerous air; and she had put on a tiny pair of mustaches, because Dubourg said that would mark her as a woman of character.

The carpenter, on the contrary, had sacrificed his budding whiskers to play Aricie. They had put on him a dress of white percale, and a wreath of roses in his hair. He imitated a woman's voice tolerably well, but he kept on chewing tobacco.

The wigmaker, who filled the rôle of Théramène, had his hair dressed in the style of Francis First, and he carried his sabre of the national guard as a sword; with all this he was gorgeous in a Spanish costume, which gave his appearance

a charming variety. The two other male characters were declaimed by Floridor from his box.

They only waited the arrival of Theseus before opening the performance, but he was still delayed. He did not come on, however, until the third act.

"Let us begin anyway," said the director; "we cannot wait for him any longer. The audience is impatient, and Theseus will certainly come before the third act."

"No doubt his toilet is keeping him," said Dubourg. "He is a man of the utmost exactness in costume, and he will not put in a pin if it is not according to tradition."

The director was at once prompter, manager and stage carpenter. He struck three little blows to attract the attention of the audience, and then drew the curtain, which at first stuck, and disclosed only half the scene; but with the aid of two of the spectators, who came upon the stage, it was completely drawn. Then M. Floridor descended into his box, candle in hand, and the drama opened.

When Dubourg appeared on the scene, swaggering majestically, a murmur of astonishment ran through the audience, which was not altogether admiration; for Dubourg certainly was not handsome in his perruque, with rouge running over his cheeks, and an old musket in his hand. From the glimpse of his head when he peeped through the curtain, people had expected a beautiful man

of lofty stature; instead of that the mantle quite crushed him, and as Théramène was tall he overshadowed the hero.

"It is a Pole!" said someone in the hall.

"He's awfully homely," said the young ladies, "but they say he has great talent."

Dubourg rolled his eyes in frightful fashion to give himself a striking physiognomy. Théramène was unfortunately so tall that his head touched the beams, and he was obliged to bend constantly, so as not to sweep the cobwebs from the ceiling of the palace.

Dubourg was not at all timid. Not content with reciting his rôle, he interspersed it with shrieks like those of a deaf person, and gesticulated so warmly that before the end of the first scene Théramène had received two stout blows from Hippolyte. At the third the hairdresser began to get angry, and said between his teeth, —

"Curse you! Take a little care! If you go on like this I shall be a baked apple before the piece is ended."

But the audience was delighted with this warmth and excitement. It applauded; it cried "Bravo!" Dubourg's enthusiasm increased, and a woman sitting in the parquet was obliged to go out. She was in a delicate situation, and feared that the contortions of Hippolyte would make her prematurely ill.

The first act went very well. The audience was

a little astonished when the prompter declaimed the rôle of Panope from his box, and no one appeared. But the rôle was short, and it passed without comment. To help matters, Floridor turned toward the parterre and said, —

"Gentlemen, the minor parts are played in this fashion in almost all the smaller cities."

The time was passing, and Theseus had not arrived.

"What the devil can he be doing at the inn!" exclaimed Dubourg. "Do you suppose he can't get into his costume?"

"Impossible!" said the director. "I gave him a superb yellow tunic, and trousers of the same material. For diadem he has a turban of the same color, that I used in 'Mahomet.'"

"Then Theseus will be all yellow?"

"Tradition says so, and we must be true to that. But let us go on with the second act, and hope that he will appear."

The second act began but did not go so well as the first. Aricie, in a fit of exasperation, expectorated his quid of tobacco at Hippolyte, upon which the hunter gave him a kick in the rear, at the moment when his lover was murmuring, "Moderate thy kindness, for the excess of it confuses me."

"That will make you pay attention," said Dubourg.

"If I were not playing a woman's rôle, I'd

answer you in another fashion!" cried the carpenter, doubling up his fists.

"I advise you to keep still."

Floridor hastened from his box to tranquillize Hippolyte and Aricie. He succeeded in settling the difficulty and the piece went on. A moment later Dubourg was in the scene with Phèdre, and waited for the prompter to give him his lines. But the prompter did not whisper, because he could no longer see. He called aloud, —

"Snuffers! snuffers! Bring the snuffers!"

"Is he crazy?" said Phèdre, and stooping over she took the candle in her fingers and snuffed it with much grace. "There, my dear," she said; "that's what we do when we have a little intuition." She then replaced the candle in the box.

This little interruption did not please the audience, which had already murmured at the dispute between Hippolyte and the Princess. One spectator was more critical than the others, because he had attended the theatre at Grenoble. He threw a raw potato and hit Phèdre in the left eye, and the watchman's wife finished the scene in tears; so that when the second act concluded it looked as if a storm were brewing.

Floridor came out of his box after each act, to see how things were going. He ran upon the stage to console Phèdre, who did not wish to play any more. He endeavored to restore the courage of his actors, and assured them that the last acts

would make everything right. He depended greatly upon the appearance of Theseus, who had not yet arrived, and who he was certain would produce a great effect; but Theseus did not come, and the anxiety became general.

"What can have happened to him? I will run over to the inn," said Dubourg, "for this delay begins to surprise me. I will bring him back immediately."

"Hurry up!" cried Floridor, "for if we make the audience wait that will spoil everything."

Let us see why M. Ménard did not reach the theatre, for he was a man who was usually very punctual in all that he had to do. After Dubourg left he busied himself with his toilet. This was no trifle for a man who had never been to a ball, had never disguised himself, and had worn the same costume for thirty years. Ménard examined thoroughly the tunic, the Turkish trousers and the turban. He had quite a struggle before he could consent to cover himself with these yellow garments and paint his venerable cheeks. He was obliged to strengthen his decision each instant, by recalling Roscius, Garrick and Molière, or he would have refused to play in the comedy. But he had promised, the engagement was made, besides which his excellency, the Baron, a Polish nobleman, set him the example, and he must yield to circumstances.

After a great deal of trouble he was at last

costumed as Theseus. He considered himself, smiled, did not find it so bad. He felt a little better when he realized that he was about to play the king of Athens. He mentally ran over his rôle, especially his entrance speech; then he emerged from his chamber to go to the theatre, saying, "Sic fata volunt."

At just this time a traveller in a fine carriage arrived at the inn. Everything about him indicated the man of wealth and the man of the world. The innkeeper hastened respectfully to receive his orders. The traveller was a short, thin old gentleman, whose face was full of severe lines. He inquired briefly whether any strangers had come to the village within the last few days, and after the host's response exclaimed,—

"I don't know what can have become of them!"

"Will monsieur have supper?" asked the innkeeper.

"No, I am not hungry. I want my horses taken care of. Perhaps I shall go right on. Give me a room where I can be quiet for a few moments."

The traveller's tone did not encourage conversation. The innkeeper hastened to get lights and conduct this dignified newcomer to his apartments. As they mounted the staircase they found themselves face to face with Ménard, who was descending majestically, declaiming his opening lines: —

"To my vows Fortune is no more opposed,
Madame, and in my arms and — "

The little old gentleman looked up on hearing the voice of Ménard. He gazed, stared in astonishment, and at length exclaimed, —

"Is it possible! Do I see Monsieur Ménard in such a garb as this?"

Ménard looked at the traveller, and stood transfixed with horror. It was the Count of Montreville, Frederic's father. His eyes sparkled with anger; he took Theseus by the arm and drew him unceremoniously into his chamber. There he placed himself judicially before him and began to interrogate him with much severity.

"What does all this mean, Monsieur Ménard? Why is this turban stuck on your head? and why do you wear this yellow dress? It makes you look like an escaped convict."

"Count, yellow is not a shameful color. In China yellow coats and peacock feathers are marks of distinction."

"Heavens, monsieur! let the Chinese alone, and answer me. Why are you thus attired?"

"My dear sir, it is because I play Theseus this afternoon."

"You play Theseus?"

"Yes, Count; I take that part in the performance of 'Phèdre' which is about to be given."

"Do you mean to say that you, a respectable tutor, are playing in a comedy at the theatre?"

"Well, what will you have, sir? Circumstances sometimes compel us; besides, Roscius was a friend of Sylla, Garrick is buried at Westminster, and Molière—"

"Do you think that you are the equal of such men, monsieur? Did I put you in charge of my son, that you might become a comic actor? Did you undertake this journey for such a purpose? Could you think, like Frederic, that I would long be your dupe? You wasted the eight thousand francs that I sent you in only fifteen days—"

"We did not waste them, monsieur."

"Silence, monsieur! I preferred to pardon this first folly. I sent money, and I learned that, instead of continuing your travels, you remained at Grenoble. Apparently my son intended to make the tour of Europe in Dauphiny."

"The country is superb, monsieur."

"I left Paris; I wished to see for myself what kept you in this country. I went to Grenoble; I did not find you; I sought you in vain in all the neighborhood. At last I find you here, in this costume! I did not expect it, I confess. But my son,—where is he? Has he gone upon the stage also?"

"No, monsieur! No, Count!"

"Well, where is he? Speak!"

"He is lost, dear Count!"

"Lost! What do you mean? Answer me, monsieur!"

"I mean, sir, that he has gone away, and I don't know where he is."

"Do you realize, monsieur, that I put my son in your care?"

"We will find him, sir; his excellency, the Baron Potoski, will send couriers to all the courts of Europe."

"And who is the Baron Potoski?"

"He is a Polish seigneur, a very learned young man. He is palatine of Rava and Sandomir, and he has a superb château on Mount Krapach, which is heated with gas."

"Oh, great Heavens, Monsieur Ménard! I believe they have made you a complete imbecile."

"No, monsieur; I know what I am talking about, and I speak only the truth."

"Where did you find this baron?"

"We met him en route, near Paris; by the way, he overturned our carriage, and I rolled in the ditch! But your son found an old friend in the Baron Potoski. We got into King Stanislas' coach, where I sat in the place of a princess of Hungary, and since then we have travelled with the baron."

The Count of Montreville strode about the room, stamping his feet with violence, and lifting his eyes to Heaven. Ménard stood in a corner, holding his turban in his hand, and not daring to budge. After stamping about for some time, the Count turned to him.

"And what has become of the baron?"

"He plays Hippolyte, sir; he is on the stage at this moment. But wait, Count; there he comes now."

At that instant, indeed, Dubourg entered the room in very lively fashion, crying,—

"Hurry, hurry, Theseus! They are waiting for you for the third act."

But he stopped motionless on seeing the Count, who exclaimed,—

"I was sure of it! It's that worthless fellow, Dubourg!"

At these words Ménard opened his eyes wide, and Dubourg contented himself with making a profound bow to Frederic's father.

"Come on, Monsieur Ménard; follow me," concluded the Count. "Take off this costume, that you have no business to be wearing, and let us go."

The poor tutor did not wait for a repetition of this order. In a moment he had thrown his yellow tunic and trousers far from him. He put on his coat, took his hat, and stood humbly waiting for the Count's next orders. Dubourg waited also, and the Count said to him,—

"As to you, monsieur, your society has been so profitable to my son, that you should realize that if I do not soon find Frederic my anger will fall on you! Follow me, Monsieur Ménard."

In a moment the Count and the tutor were in

the carriage, from which the horses had not yet been unharnessed. They rapidly left the inn, and turned toward Grenoble, where the Count hoped to get some news of his son.

Dubourg was at first a little stunned by what had happened, but he began to think immediately of what might ensue. The audience waited for Theseus, without whom nothing could be done; and the public in Voreppe did not seem to take a disappointment amiably. On the other hand, he had received from the director the money for himself and for Ménard, and, since Ménard was gone, how could the engagement be kept?

While he considered this difficulty a confused noise was heard in the street. Dubourg ran to the window and saw Floridor coming with a little crowd from the audience, who were swearing and making a great noise. They declared that the Poles should either play or take a beating, and Floridor cried, —

"They will play, gentlemen! they will play! I have paid them in advance."

Dubourg saw the danger which threatened him, and considered whether he should return the money and excuse himself for the departure of his comrade, or whether he should leave the director to settle matters with the public. This last decision pleased him best. Even if he returned the money, he feared he might be roughly treated; and, besides, he was convinced that the

sum he had received was by no means an equivalent for the superior acting he had given.

The noise and the crowd increased outside; the whole town seemed to be in the court. Dubourg hesitated no longer, but ran to another window in the room, which looked out on the fields. He jumped, fell upon the sorrel underneath, rose, wrapped his mantle about his body, and ran across the fields as if the entire city was at his heels.

The Count and Ménard arrived in a short time at Grenoble and stopped at the inn where the three travellers had stayed. The Count had asked the tutor about it, during the journey. He had also made other inquiries, and the responses he received enabled him easily to understand that it was a love affair which kept Frederic in the neighborhood, which relieved the Count's anxiety, for he did not doubt that his presence would be sufficient to restore his son to reason.

When they arrived at the inn Ménard had a scene with the landlord over the wagonette that had not been returned. He spoke also of Dubourg, and said that one of his creditors had come to Grenoble in search of him, and meant to have him arrested.

Poor Ménard had not a word to say. He was confounded to realize that the man he had believed to be a Polish nobleman had been making game of him all the time they travelled together.

The Count of Montreville put an end to the innkeeper's talk by paying him what he asked. The travellers slept at Grenoble, and it was the Count's intention to go next day with Ménard to the neighborhood where he had left Frederic. But the next morning, as the Count was ready to set forth, Ménard uttered a cry of joy, saying, —

"There he is, Count! The sheep has returned to the fold, the child is restored to his father! Let us kill the fatted calf! There is your son!"

It was indeed Frederic who entered the inn, but he was far from suspecting that his father was there.

The Count left the carriage quickly, followed by Ménard. He approached his son with an air of severity, and the young man lowered his eyes and appeared overcome at finding himself in the presence of his father.

"I have found you at last, monsieur," said the Count. "I have heard news of you. I have seen the companion of your pleasures. I have learned that you ended your travels in a wood — in a wretched village. You think, no doubt, that you have sufficient culture; but I will not reproach you. I deserve everything, for having given you such a companion as this gentleman. Let us forget it all and go on."

Frederic bore his father's reproaches with courage, but these last words pierced his heart. He could scarcely maintain his composure, he seemed

overwhelmed. He looked about him and behind him, and, stammering, begged his father for the delay of a day or two; but the Count pretended not to hear, and repeated, in a tone of severity,—

"My son, I am waiting for you."

The carriage was ready: what could he do? He hesitated still, but the Count took him by the hand, led him toward the carriage, and he dared not resist. He had been given no time for reflection, and the carriage carried him rapidly away from Grenoble. He put his head out to look back at Vizille, and sighed deeply. His eyes moistened with tears as he thought of Sister Anne, and he said to himself repeatedly,—

"Poor little thing! what will she think?"

CHAPTER II

The Pleasures of Love Last Only a Moment; The Sorrows of Love Endure for a Lifetime

Why is the love that endures for a month so different to that of a day, and why is that of a year less ardent and vivid than that of a month? Why do we enjoy so indifferently that which we possess in the fullest abundance, and why do we sometimes cease altogether to enjoy that which a short time before we so ardently desired? It is because all is transitory in this world of shadows in which we are ourselves but passing strangers; it is because men are eager for pleasure and are constantly seeking for something new, and because for many of them love is merely a passing distraction.

But, you will say to me, perhaps, I have myself been married for more than three months, and I am sure that I love my wife now quite as dearly as I loved her on our marriage day; or perhaps you will say, my lover has adored me for six months and now loves me better than ever, I am sure of that; but then there are always exceptions to every rule. and each one can quote it in regard to his own case; finally, I did not tell you that love

takes his flight; I only know that, as time passes, he changes his tint, and, unfortunately, the last shades have not the brilliancy nor the charm of the primitive color.

Undoubtedly Frederic still loved the pretty dumb girl; however, he had been living with her in the woods for three weeks, and he began to feel the life there a little weary and monotonous. But lovers almost invariably make the grave mistake of giving themselves too completely to the intoxication of pleasure in the first days of their happiness. In this they resemble the gourmands who sit down to the table with a great appetite for the good things that are before them, but who eat so fast that they are sated before the repast is half finished.

Sister Anne, however, did not as yet feel this weariness; indeed, if the truth be told, she was happier than ever, more loving and affectionate when near her adored Frederic. But in general the love of women is deeper, sincerer, more lasting than that of the other sex, and, besides, her affliction and her solitary condition set the poor little orphan apart from ordinary women. Frederic was more than her lover, he was all the world to her, he was her universe; since she had known him her mind had been formed, her soul had been elevated. She had for the first time learned to think, to reflect, to form desires, to fear, to hope, to love; a thousand new sensa-

tions had made her heart beat. Before she knew love, her existence had been only a dream; but Frederic had awakened her.

When she saw that he was sorrowful, preoccupied, she redoubled her attentions and caresses. She would run out, drawing him into the wood, disappear for a moment from his eyes, and conceal herself among the shrubberies, or in a clump of trees, whence she would emerge suddenly and throw herself into his arms. This sweet and childish grace added greatly to the charm of her beauty.

When night fell they returned to the garden of the hut. Sister Anne, light and active, prepared in a moment their evening repast, which they did not take until old Marguerite had gone to her rest. The young mute gathered fruits, brought milk and black bread; and then, sitting down near Frederic, she fed him with her own hand, selecting what she thought was the best and most beautiful of her store.

When her lover spoke she listened with delight. It was evident that the accents of Frederic penetrated even to her heart; once he sang a tender little ballad for her, and the young girl, motionless, attentive, fearing to lose a single sound, signed to him to repeat the song. From that time her greatest pleasure was to hear Frederic sing. He had a sweet, flexible voice, and she would pass the entire day in listening to him.

It was thus that Sister Anne sought to captivate

her beloved. There was none of the cleverness of the coquette in her spell: it was simply love, and that alone; while in all that the coquette plans there is not a grain of the mighty passion.

Why are we such imbeciles that we allow ourselves to be taken in the snares of the one, and repay the sincere love of the other with coldness?

It is because the coquette knows how to hold us by a breath. She sees that we are well smitten, and she cruelly lays her plans: if we are a little cold, she reanimates us by the titillation of jealousy; if we are too confident, her raillery awakens our fears; when we are repelled and ready to break away, she becomes tender, sensitive, passionate, and with a word brings us to her knees. These continual changes do not allow the heart time to grow cold.

I was about to compare men to the gourmands, whose appetites are sharpened by variety of dishes, but I pause; it might be suspected that I had studied the art of loving in the royal kitchen.

Frederic at length began to make little excursions in the neighborhood. Sister Anne was alarmed at first, but he soon returned, and her fears disappeared. Frederic began to think of the future, of his father. What would the Count of Montreville say if he knew that his son was living in the midst of a wood, with a young villager? This thought came often to trouble the repose of

Frederic, and as time passed it returned with increasing vividness.

Sometimes he said to himself, "If my father should see this young girl, it would be impossible for him not to love her." But would he give her to his son as a wife? No, that was not probable. The Count of Montreville was not in the least romantic; he was proud; he loved wealth, opulence, because he knew that money always adds to the dignity of position. It was not to be hoped that he would allow his son to marry a penniless villager.

Of course, it could be done without his consent; but in that case he must renounce his fortune, work for a living, and learn to use his talents. In any case he must leave the wood; for Frederic began to feel that it was not common sense for a young man of twenty-one to fly from the world, and that the possession of a pretty wife was no reason for burying her in the depths of a forest.

From day to day these reasons gained more force. When Frederic was not with Sister Anne these thoughts filled his mind, and his absences became longer each day. The poor little girl groaned over the change. She counted the minutes that she passed away from her lover; she ran into the valley, to see if he was returning, and the corners of her mouth fell sorrowfully when he was a long time away. But it was such a joy to

see him again that her sorrow passed quickly. She forgot all her anxieties when he pressed her against his heart.

A month rolled away. Dubourg and Ménard had not returned to inquire about Frederic, and this astonished him greatly. He did not know, as we do, that his two travelling companions were then established with their friend Chambertin, who had prepared that fiery surprise which enabled him to see what we know well, but which he did not know at all, and in fact never did know, for his wife persuaded him that he had seen nothing but smoke.

Frederic did not understand at all the indifference of his friends, especially that of Ménard. He said to himself, "They have had some new adventure; Dubourg must have committed some new folly. I did wrong to give him all the money."

The result of these reflections was always the conviction that he must go to Grenoble and find out what these gentlemen were doing. But how could he face Dubourg, after telling him that he wished never to leave the wood, that he turned his back upon a false and perverse world, and that none of its pleasures were worth the tranquillity to be found in a little cottage. This prospect of recantation seemed embarrassing, and prevented Frederic's visit to the town; sometimes a man would rather persevere in a folly than acknowledge he has committed it.

But constant idleness weighed upon Frederic. With the best intentions, it is impossible to talk to a pretty woman for twenty-four hours at a stretch without weariness. The poor little girl saw that her friend was no longer happy, and sighed often; her own joy was therefore shadowed. At last, one beautiful evening, Frederic could endure his weariness and anxiety no longer; he said to his companion, —

"Tomorrow, at daybreak, I shall go to Grenoble to find some news of my friends." The young girl remained a moment immovable, as if struck by an unexpected blow; then her breast heaved, and two rivers of tears escaped from her eyes. She extended her arms toward the village road, then folded them over her bosom, as if to say, —

"And me, — you will leave me?"

The poor girl could not beg her lover to stay; she could not use those sweet and tender words so difficult to resist. But how expressive were her gestures, and how eloquent her eyes! They spoke all her thoughts, so that words became unnecessary.

"I will return to you," said Frederic; "I promise you I will return, and I will never love any but you."

These words softened the anguish of Sister Anne, for she never dreamed of doubting her lover's promises. Remember, dear ladies, Sister

Anne did not know the world. This is sometimes a very painful knowledge, since it teaches us to renounce the illusions of the heart.

The evening passed sorrowfully; for, though she did not doubt the return of her lover, the idea of his departure seemed cruel to this burning soul. Sister Anne had learned to know happiness for the first time in loving, and she felt sure it must last till the end of life.

Frederic did all he could to console her, but in giving new proofs of love a lover makes himself more beloved. Is this, then, a good means of softening the pain of separation? At least it is the one usually employed.

The day opened very sombrely to the eyes of the young orphan. Can that day be beautiful which separates us from the one we love best? Frederic mounted a hill upon his route, holding in his hands the trembling palms of his little sweetheart. He parted from her there, after he had renewed his promises, and made the most tender adieux. He turned from her at last and disappeared from the eyes of his beloved.

What a weight fell upon the heart of the young girl! She could no longer see Frederic! But she stood there, her eyes sought him still. All at once she looked about her, a groan escaped her, she fell upon her knees near an old oak. She kissed it with reverence. Poor little one! she was on the very spot where her mother died watching

for her father! She recognized the place, and, joining her hands, implored Heaven's kindness, and besought the blessing of her mother's spirit.

Sister Anne went several times a year to watch and pray under the old oak where the unhappy Clotilda died; but she had never been there with Frederic. On this day they had gone over the hill, because the path led into the village road. Sister Anne, absorbed in her sorrow, had not noticed it.

Poor little one! What a melancholy presentiment weighed suddenly upon her heart! She thought of her mother; she said to herself, "Alas! shall I be as unhappy as she was?"

She must go back to the cabin; old Marguerite might be in need of her care. Sister Anne slowly left the hill; several times she looked back at the old oak and sighed. He had left her there! Like her mother, she will come back each day to this spot and wait for his return.

She saw again her cottage, her woods, her goats; she returned to her accustomed work, she took up her ordinary habits;—but everything was changed to her eyes. The wood seemed sorrowful to her, and everything wearied her; her garden had lost its charm, her dwelling was a desert. Frederic had been the ornament of all, and Frederic was no longer there. Before she knew him, her eyes had fallen with pleasure upon surroundings which were now indifferent to her; these

objects had not changed, but she had lost peace, repose, and nothing had for her the same charm.

Frederic had not said how long he would be away, and Sister Anne hoped to see him soon; she did not know that he had met his father at Grenoble, and that the Count had taken him to Paris.

Each day Sister Anne returned to the hill with her goats, and her eyes were fixed unceasingly on the village road. She longed to see Frederic, as poor Clotilda had longed to see her husband, years ago. She amused herself by writing her lover's name in the earth, with a little stick. This was all he had taught her, but she was fond of tracing the word, and had done it so often with Frederic that she had learned to write it legibly.

Several days rolled away, and Frederic had not returned. Sister Anne did not lose hope, because she could not believe that her lover would fail to keep his promise. Every morning when she went up the hill she said, "Today, surely, he will come back with me." Vain hope! She must again return alone to her cottage, to that dwelling whence repose had fled, since love had entered in.

But a new sentiment came to add at least variety to her sufferings. Sister Anne carried within her bosom the pledge of her love to Frederic. She had been so truly his wife that it was fitting she should become a mother. In her simplicity, she had not thought of this, but suddenly the significance of it struck her spirit; then a new

joy rose in her heart. She fed on this hope with rapture. She would have a child! Frederic's child! It seemed to her that she loved it already. This idea transported her. What happiness to be a mother! And what a joy it would be to tell Frederic this precious secret!

The young girl ran dancing about the wood. In her delight she committed a thousand follies; she looked at herself in the waters of the brook; she studied herself in the fountain; she began to be proud of her motherhood, and did not shrink at all from its visible evidence. Poor little one, whose every action proved the innocence of her mind! Let her rejoice in the delirium of this new sentiment born in her heart. That, at least, she will never lose.

But time was passing, and Frederic did not return. Sister Anne had the certainty of being a mother, and she could not share this joy with her lover. There must always be pain mingled with pleasure, and the joy of the young girl was poisoned by the anxiety she suffered because of the absence of her adored one; each day the old oak was a witness of her sighs and her tears.

CHAPTER III

The Big Beast

We left our worthy acquaintance Dubourg running across the fields in order to escape the theatrical manager, the excited and angry public, and the raw potatoes of which poor Phèdre had received such a sorry taste. We must not forget that in the ardor of his rapid flight he had not had time to doff the costume of Hippolyte. His head was still buried under the immense Louis Fourteenth perruque, which fell in great curls upon his neck and over his shoulders, and his body was still enveloped in the rabbit-skin cloak.

Dubourg ran for at least an hour, crossing the roads, jumping the ditches, walking through the standing grain and across the ploughed fields, leaping over the hedges, and all this without knowing where he was or where he was going to; for we must remember that it was in the middle of the evening that he had begun his flight, and consequently it was now night, and as the rain fell in torrents the moon did not show its light to guide his steps; however, his only concern was to put himself at as great a distance as possible from his pursuers.

Dubourg stopped at last, and listened, but heard nothing to indicate that he was followed. The most profound silence reigned about him. He tried to get the points of the compass, to find out where he was. No longer afraid of being taken, he felt the need of repose; but in autumn the nights are cool, and our hero did not care to pass the night in the open fields, with the rain on his back, although his perruque served as a hat, and his mantle was a better protection than an umbrella. But in the end these garments would become soaked, and he would be very uncomfortable. He must therefore find a shelter.

He knew that he was walking in a vegetable field, and, going on, he encountered a hedge, high enough to bar his passage; but the protecting mantle saved him from pricks. He thrust his leg through, crept a little, left some shreds of rabbit fur and some locks of his perruque among the bushes, and finally found himself on the other side, although he knew no better than before where he was. He distinguished several trees, some pots of flowers and a trellis; and these objects led him to think that he must be in a garden. He walked about, his hands stretched out before him, and at last touched an expanse of wall. Presently he found himself beneath a roof, then he was stopped by some bundles of hay and straw. He was under a shed, which no doubt served as a protection to the fodder.

"Zounds!" exclaimed Dubourg, "I've found just what I want for the night; here's a good shelter from the rain; I'll stretch out on these bundles of straw, wrap myself in my mantle, and go to sleep. Tomorrow I'll think about my affairs."

Dubourg soon arranged his couch. He was very comfortable under the shed, and, blessing the chance that had brought him to this asylum, was soon sound asleep.

The outhouse under which Dubourg slept was at the end of a garden; but this garden contained also a pretty little house, where lived Bertrand the farmer, who seven years before had married one of the villagers of the hamlet. She was a fresh, alert woman, and was called the beautiful Claudine. The pair had two lusty children, and Claudine was willing the family should be larger.

In the country early rising is the rule. Fanfan and Marie, the farmer's two children, respectively four and five years old, were up at dawn, and after they had eaten their bread and milk ran out as usual to play in the garden.

In their play they approached the shed, and what did they see on the straw? Imagine Azor in "Beauty and the Beast," and you will have an idea of Dubourg. His face was entirely concealed by a profusion of chestnut red curls, which fell to his breast. His entire body was hidden by a mantle, which if not a tiger's skin, was that of

some other animal. Imagine the children's terror when they saw this enormous mass.

Little Marie let fall the buttered cake she held in her hand, the little boy opened his mouth to its widest extent, and could not close it, for he was almost petrified with terror.

"Oh, oh, brother! what do you see?" cried Marie, pressing close to him, and pointing to the object on the straw.

"Oh, oh! how ugly it is!" exclaimed Fanfan, slipping behind his sister.

Then the two children fled to the house, shrieking loudly, which did not waken Dubourg, because the fatigues of the previous day had been so great that he slept like the dead.

Bertrand had just kissed his Claudine, and was about to set out for his work in the fields, when the children rushed in; their faces were convulsed with fright, and they were shrieking loudly.

"What's the matter?" cried the father. "Speak, you little rascals!"

The children were so terrified that at first they could not utter a word. At last they both cried in the same breath,—

"Down there! under the shed, a big beast all hairy, on the straw, with a black head, and a red mane; it's bigger than our donkey. Oh, but it's ugly!"

"Do you understand what it's all about?" Bertrand asked his wife.

"They're talking about a big beast, my man!"

"Good Lord! there's none but us in the house. How could it have got in? It must be Neighbor Gervais' bull, or Dame Catherine's donkey."

"No, papa; it's all gray and all red! Oh, it's awful!"

"The devil! What are you talking about?"

"Has it a tail?" asked Claudine.

"Gracious, mamma! I don't know. The beast seemed to be asleep, and we ran home just as fast as we could."

"We'd better go and see — hadn't we, my man?"

"Yes, yes; we must go."

But Bertrand, who was not very brave, was already trembling a little, and he prudently went to get his gun, which was loaded with salt. Claudine took a broom, the children their sticks, and thus armed they all went toward the outhouse. The children led the van, for, although they were afraid, they were of an age to love the extraordinary. Bertrand walked beside his wife, who pushed him to make him go forward. The nearer they approached the shed, the more slowly they advanced, and the children were especially warned to make no noise, because it would be much better to see the beast asleep than awake.

At last they approached the little building, and the children cried, with startled voices, —

"Look? There he is, down there!"

Bertrand and Claudine stretched their necks; they saw the frightful object, but dared not approach it nearer; the husband turned pale and stepped closer to his wife, who signed to the children not to go near it.

"Let us go and seek for help," said Bertrand at last, in a half-stifled voice.

"If you would only take aim at him from behind, my man?"

"Yes, but my gun's unfortunately only loaded with salt, which couldn't kill him. It would only wake him up, and then he'd be furious and might jump on us."

"Oh, yes, that's true! You mustn't shoot! Let us run quickly to the village! Come, children! O mon Dieu what if the monster should wake up?"

Bertrand, who was already in advance, ran as though the beast were pursuing him. He hastened to the village, which was only a gunshot from his house, and was soon joined there by Claudine. Both told everywhere of the wonderful and terrifying animal that had been found in their garden, and with that feeling of exaggeration which fear always induces, they declared that the beast they had seen was about the size of a bull; and as adventures always grow greater and greater in the telling, as each one adds to what he has heard, so the bull presently became a camel, the

camel was changed to a lion, the lion to an elephant, and they would have gone still farther had they known of a more enormous animal.

The fact remained, however, that there was an extraordinary beast in Bertrand's garden, and in a moment this news had set the village in a turmoil. The people ran from all sides to talk it over. The wives called their husbands from the fields; the mothers sent their little children into the house, and forbade them to go out. Everybody hurried to the mayor, who was a good farmer like his constituents, and who declared that he knew no more about beasts than the other citizens of his town. But there was in the district a man of some pretension named Latouche, who had been a deputy in Paris, and who liked to pass for a man of culture, a wit, a practical joker and a savant. They went in search of Latouche, who was engaged in trying to discover a process for preserving fruits without sugar, and they informed him of the event which had put all the village in a stir.

Latouche listened with a serious air, pinched his chin solemnly, and made them repeat the slightest details several times, and, after he had reflected a long while, finally said,—

"Well, we'll have to go and see what it is."

Everybody repeated, "That's right! that's so! Let's go and see this beast!"

"When I have seen it," said Latouche, "I will

tell you exactly what it is, and from what region it comes. I ought to know, for I have studied botany, and I have a cousin who is under-porter in the Museum of Natural History at Paris."

They all prepared for the visit to Bertrand's house, each man arming himself with what he could find, and even the women taking picks or rakes, because the beast might be dangerous. The mayor joined the crowd, and Latouche, who was the only one in the neighborhood who had a gun in good condition, — for Bertrand's could carry only a load of salt, — took upon himself to direct the campaign which was to follow.

They left the village, men, women, boys and girls, and marched on, talking over the great event; but the nearer they approached Bertrand's house, the less desire they seemed to have for conversation. Soon terror took possession of them so completely that the silence became general, and they advanced in a closer column, each one seeking to draw courage from the eyes of the man or woman next him.

Latouche walked in front, his gun on his shoulder, giving orders as if he expected to surprise an enemy's post. As they approached the hedge of the garden Bertrand uttered a cry, and concealed himself behind a great rock, exclaiming, —

"There he is!"

Immediately all the peasants made a backward

movement, and Latouche threw himself into the centre of the battalion; but at length, hearing no noise, they approached to find the object which had frightened Bertrand. It was a red cat that had passed along the hedge.

"Zounds, Bertrand!" cried Latouche, hurrying to regain his place in the van. "Do you know that you are a terrible coward? It's shameful to show so little courage at your age!"

"Oh, yes, it's true," said Claudine. "He's an awful coward. I have to scold him all the time about it."

"To scream and make an outcry about a cat!"

"Damn it, Monsieur Latouche! I saw something slipping along the wall, and it was red, and I thought—"

"And perhaps it's nothing but a bagatelle that has set all the village by the ears, and interrupted me in my chemical experiments."

"Oh, no! that's no trifle! You'll soon see that it's worth the trouble. There it is, under the shed! Do you want to go through this little door? Then you'll be right there."

"No; let's go in by the house first, so that we can examine the beast from a distance."

They followed the advice of Latouche, and, entering Bertrand's house, went from there into the garden. As they approached the shed the most courageous turned pale, and some of the women dared go no farther. Latouche, who was

like those swaggering fellows who whistle to keep up their courage, gave orders right and left, but was careful to keep in the background himself.

"There he is! there he is!" cried several villagers at last, and they pointed out Dubourg to the others. He had remained in the same position because he was still sound asleep. Terror was painted on every face; but it was mingled with curiosity, and each person stretched his neck, or leaned forward, or climbed on his neighbor's shoulder. Latouche at once ordered a halt, and from all sides these exclamations were heard: —

"Oh, but it's ugly!" "Oh, but it's horrible!" "What a head!" "Look at its body!"

"You don't see its eyes!" cried some. "Nor its paws!" said others.

"Hush! hush!" warned Latouche. "Don't talk so loud; you'll wake it up. Wait till I examine it. Friends! have you ever heard of the famous beast which ravaged Gévaudan?"

"No, no!" cried the villagers.

"Well, this one seems to me to be very much like that. You don't see its feet, because, after the fashion of the Turks, this monster has them crossed under him. As to its eyes, they're turned toward the straw, which is fortunate for us, because there's often a deadly poison in them. The more I look at the skin and the mane, yes, I'm sure it's a sea lion, and it has come to us from Normandy."

"A sea lion," cried the peasants. "Is that dangerous?"

"Well, pretty much so! It would eat a man as easily as it would an oyster."

"O mon Dieu! but what shall we do? How shall we catch it?"

"But may be it's dead," said Claudine. "It hasn't changed its position since morning."

"Dead! Good gracious! But who'll find out?"

"Suppose you fire the gun," said the mayor.

"Yes, but that's taking a great deal of risk. The ball often glides off the skin of these animals."

"Pull its ear."

"You must see it to do that."

"All the same," said the mayor, "we must take this animal, alive or dead. Aim well, fire! And the rest of us, myself and the bravest, will make a rampart with our picks. And, good Lord, if the beast comes on, we'll give him a hot reception."

The mayor's little speech restored the courage of the villagers, who formed a line with lifted picks, and were ready to strike. Latouche, although he did not like his duty, decided to pull the trigger. He placed himself behind the line, and, passing the gun between two peasants, he adjusted it, and, after taking aim for five minutes, at last banged away, and the gun missed fire.

This was very fortunate for Dubourg, who did not dream what danger threatened him.

The mayor was broken-hearted. Latouche did not wish to try again, the crowd stood motionless, when suddenly our sleeper made a movement, and, turning over, gave a very audible yawn, that was taken for a roar by the bystanders. The bravest immediately dropped their weapons and fell back. They crowded, they pressed against each other, they thought only of their fright, and thus each one pushed the man or woman next him, to make way for himself. The boys tumbled over the girls, and the women dragged off the men. Latouche climbed a tree, Bertrand knocked over the mayor, the most agile jumped over the hedge, and the heaviest crawled underneath, in trying to get away. Claudine fell head over heels, as did several of the other women, and in the disorder the skirts of these ladies flew higher than is usually customary in broad daylight. But no one paid the slightest attention, for nothing could have stopped the flight of the terror-stricken crowd. When great events are happening, the most fascinating details are not noticed.

Dubourg was completely awakened by all this noise. He rubbed his eyes, and began to free himself from his perruque, which prevented him from seeing clearly, and then from his mantle, which stifled him. He rose, for he heard cries, groans, words which he did not understand — in fact, an

uproar, of which he was far from suspecting the cause. He left the shed, advanced, and then stopped, struck by the picture which presented itself to his eyes. There was much cause for astonishment in it, although in the confusion he saw some very agreeable things. He walked on, saying to himself, —

"I don't know what fly has stung these people, but this is evidently a place where they have an unusual manner of receiving strangers. It should be an easy matter to make acquaintances here."

As the roaring of the animal was no longer heard, the boldest one among the villagers ventured, little by little, to look back. He saw Dubourg's face, — although Dubourg could perceive only a mixture of legs and arms in the picture before him, — and the stranger's aspect was anything but frightful, when he was freed from the cursed perruque.

"Look! look!" cried the peasant. "Who is that man, and where did he come from?"

At these words everyone turned and gazed at Dubourg, who, after gallantly pulling down Claudine's skirt, and helping her to rise, replied to the mayor, who had repeated the peasant's question, —

"I'm a poor devil, an honest man, surely. I got lost in the storm last night, and didn't know where to go; so I took the liberty of sleeping on

Latouche climbed a tree, Bertrand knocked over the mayor, the most agile jumped over the hedge, and the heaviest crawled underneath, in trying to get away.

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
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these bundles of straw. I've slept like a trooper, and I hope I've done no harm to anyone."

"Did you sleep in this outhouse?" said the mayor.

"Certainly."

"And you weren't eaten by the big beast!" cried Bertram.

"What big beast?"

"Why, the hairy beast! The beast with red hair, that slept there."

Dubourg turned, saw his perruque and mantle, and, understanding the cause of the peasants' terror, yielded to laughter, which for some moments he could not repress. The villagers began to lose their fear when they heard laughter. The fugitives paused, those who had gone farthest returned, and the women rose and readjusted their clothing. Everyone looked at Dubourg, awaiting an explanation, while he went back to the shed, took his mantle in one hand, his perruque in the other, and returned to the group.

"My friends," he said, "here is the beast that has frightened you so much. Take what vengeance you please."

As he concluded, he threw the perruque and mantle on the ground, and the peasants approached, laughing with Dubourg, and handling the objects, while they said, —

"What! was it that? O mon Dieu! what fools we were!"

Then Latouche descended from the pear-tree, into which he had climbed, and exclaimed, —

"I told you that imbecile Bertrand had no more courage than a hare. He told us a silly yarn, and took a hazelnut for an ox. Now see if I was right."

"Pardi!" cried Bertrand; "seems to me that nut story gave you a pretty big panic, for you climbed a tree like a cat, and you ran so fast you knocked Claudine over."

"Shut up!" exclaimed Latouche, who had turned as red as a turkey cock at Bertrand's response. "Shut up! I climbed the tree so that I could get a better view of the so-called animal."

"But you threw down your gun."

"You mean I dropped it."

"Never mind, never mind," said Dubourg; "I am the cause of all this trouble. Truly, under this mantle and perruque I must have been frightful from a distance. The bravest people do not always like to encounter a savage beast. I am sure Monsieur Latouche was very courageous when he ventured to fire on me."

This adroit little speech flattered everybody, and Latouche was restored to good humor.

"This stranger expresses himself very well," he remarked. "He is certainly a savant."

After the manner in which they had accepted his compliments, it only remained for Dubourg to announce himself a baron; but, since his en-

counter with M. Chambertin, he no longer cared to play the nobleman. The mayor asked him where he had come from in such a singular costume, and Dubourg immediately invented a story of thieves, who had attacked and pillaged him, stifled his cries with the perruque, and wrapped him in the mantle, probably intending to carry him to their cave, when the sound of horses approaching frightened them, and they fled, leaving him in the middle of the field.

This story interested the villagers greatly in favor of Dubourg. As soon as their fears were relieved, they found him delightful. The mayor made out an official report, and Latouche exclaimed, —

"I've said for a long time that there are thieves in this neighborhood! I've lost two chickens in the last eight days, and that's not all! We must make a regular campaign, fellows! I'll put myself at your head, and you know how I carry out plans! The mayor is going to call out the police, and we will begin as soon as they have finished."

While they were waiting for the campaign, the people busied themselves with Dubourg, who was in need of refreshment; and the question was discussed as to who should entertain him for the next few days. Each villager generously offered him a coat to replace his mantle, and his house to stay in while he was in the neighborhood. Dubourg gave the preference to Bertrand, because

he had not forgotten the glance Claudine sent him when he helped her to rise. Bertrand's wife was much flattered by this honor. She courtesied, and as she courtesied she smiled, and this smile seemed to say many things. Dubourg felt that he already had reason to congratulate himself upon his conquest.

The mayor, as the foremost man of the district, had the pleasure of offering a good large woollen coat in place of the one the thieves had stolen from Dubourg. In return, he took possession of the famous mantle, which he thought he could make use of as a bed cover in winter. Monsieur Latouche received the perruque, which he had merited by his conduct in this affair.

At last they all went back to their work, some returning to their fields and some to their cottages. Bertrand had a great square of land to plough, and when he returned to his duty he charged his wife to take good care of monsieur while he was gone. Claudine promised, and kept her word. The handsome villager was active and obliging; she was determined to prove to the stranger that he had done well in giving her the preference, and she spared no pains to make him content. On his side, Dubourg wished to efface the terrible impression his appearance had made in the village, and we know that Dubourg had a talent for making himself popular with the ladies. It is not strange, therefore, that when Bertrand

returned from his work in the evening, his wife ran to meet him, saying, —

"Oh, ho, my man; we were big fools to be so afraid of this gentleman. He's just like any other man — do you see? But he's got lots more spirit than you!"

Dubourg, who was very well treated by the villagers, found it very agreeable to pass a little time with these good people, who wished by their attentions to make him forget his misfortunes; and he repaid his hosts by evening entertainments of story-telling. To the peasants, there was no gift like that of talking for hours of things interesting, frightful, and consequently amusing; Dubourg had this gift, and, when M. Latouche was present at his recitals, he would put in some words of Latin. The chemist, who did not understand any language but his own, would turn to the audience and say, —

"That's all true. He's just sworn to it in German!"

But at the end of two weeks Dubourg was weary of telling stories to the peasants in the evening, and making love to their wives in the morning. He determined to leave the village so as to get news of his companions; and, as he had still in his pocket the whole of the hundred francs he had gained by playing Hippolyte, he could make his journey without being disguised as a big beast. In spite of all Claudine could do to

persuade him, he decided to go. He thanked the mayor, Latouche, and all the citizens of the neighborhood, for the kind reception they had given him. He thanked Bertrand especially, and his wife not a little. Finally he started, holding in his hand a big knotted stick, which was a fit complement to the broad-brimmed hat and home-spun coat. He said as he walked along, —

"Those who have seen me play the gentleman will not recognize me, and that is exactly what I want."

Dubourg, however, thought it prudent not to go through Voreppe, where he might encounter M. Floridor or some member of his troupe. He did not wish to venture into Grenoble either, where M. Durosey might still be watching for him, and the eyes of a creditor are difficult to deceive. He turned in the direction of Vizille, where he hoped to find Frederic, or to get some news of him.

He walked along gayly, singing happily, and after a while sat down on the grass to eat the good things with which Claudine had stuffed his pockets, for women think of everything. Dubourg blessed the forethought of Madame Bertrand and said to himself, "How can I be melancholy when I have had proof a thousand times that these delightful creatures are interested in my fate? Let us drink to the health of Claudine, of Madame de Chambertin, of Goton, of the little Delphine,

and of many others, who have brought me pleasant hours, and have left me sweet memories."

He drank water from a brook, but he made the best of it. Besides, he had money, and could buy wine if he wished, which made the water more palatable. At the close of the day he approached Vizille, and said to himself, "If Monsieur le Comte has learned from Ménard of Frederic's love affair, he will have hunted him up in the wood, and I shall not find him there; but I shall see the pretty blonde, and she will tell me what has happened."

Dubourg did not know that the poor little thing could not speak. He crossed the valley, entered the wood, searched, called, at last saw the cottage. He entered, the garden was deserted, and he went into the tiny house, to find only old Marguerite asleep in her chair.

Dubourg left the cottage, astonished at not seeing the young girl. He feared that perhaps the story he had invented for Ménard had proved true, and that Frederic had taken the little one away with him. He started for the village to see if he could get any news of Sister Anne, but as he was crossing one of the forest pathways he saw her walking slowly toward her home.

The attitude of the young girl was so sorrowful, such a profound melancholy was painted upon her features, that Dubourg was much touched. He watched her for some moments, and said

to himself, "Poor little thing! he has gone, and he did not take you. It would have been better for you if you had never seen him."

Just then Sister Anne heard someone walking near her, she saw someone, and ran like lightning until she reached Dubourg, when she paused, and her features, which had been animated by hope, became once more clouded by suffering. She shook her head sorrowfully; it was not he. But when Dubourg spoke she looked at him with more attention, recognizing his voice, and joy filled her heart once more. This is a friend of Frederic's. He came once in search of him, and doubtless he has come again to tell her when Frederic will return. She approached him, her eyes full of questions, and waited with impatience until he should explain his presence. Dubourg was astonished, and asked her what had become of Frederic.

At the mention of Frederic's name she trembled. She pointed to the route he had taken, counted on her fingers the number of days that had elapsed since his departure, and seemed to ask whether he would return. From these signs Dubourg understood the pitiful state of Sister Anne, and he thought only of consoling her; but for her there was no consolation, no happiness, without Frederic.

"Poor girl!" said Dubourg. "He was right when he assured me she was not like any of

those he had known. But to leave her in this wood! Ah, that's wicked! Such grace! such charms! It is a crime! I have half a notion to take her to Paris!"

"Why didn't you follow him?" he asked her. "Who keeps you in this wood? Come with me, my child! We will find Frederic, or if we do not there are a thousand others who would be glad to take his place."

Sister Anne gazed at him in astonishment. She did not seem to understand him, but when he made a gesture as if to lead her with him, she withdrew from him swiftly. She pointed to the cottage and made him understand that it held someone she could not leave. Ah, if it had not been for Marguerite, with what eagerness she would have followed Dubourg, for she believed he would conduct her directly to the arms of her lover! But she never could abandon the aged woman who had cared for her in her childhood, and who had filled the place of her mother,—poor Marguerite, who was broken with age, and in need of the most constant care. Such a thought could not even tempt the young mute for a moment; ingratitude was a stranger to her heart.

"Very well," said Dubourg; "remain in the wood, then, poor little thing, and may you find peace and happiness here!"

The eyes of Sister Anne still questioned him.

"Yes, yes!" he said to her; "he will return; you will see him again. Dry your eyes. Soon, no doubt, soon, he will come and console you."

These words brought a ray of hope to the pale and melancholy face of the young mute, who smiled at Dubourg for making her this promise, and then, nodding adieu to him, returned to Marguerite.

Dubourg left the wood, and in spite of his carelessness he did not sing as he crossed the valley and regained the road. His heart was saddened by the image of this unfortunate girl, to whom he had given a hope which he feared would never be realized. He had never before been so touched, and for several leagues he thought of nothing but Sister Anne, repeating again and again, "Poor little thing! how she has suffered!"

But at last the recollection of his own affairs recalled him to his natural humor. He gave his coat and hat to an old-clothes man, and, having clothed himself more respectably at slight expense, prepared to take the road to Lyons, thence to return to Paris and his two companions.

CHAPTER IV

Illusions of the Heart. Inconstancy and Fidelity

The post-chaise which carried our reluctant young lover to Paris went with the velocity of the wind towards its destination. The Count de Montreville, who was desirous of distracting his son from the regretful recollections with which his mind must be filled, was intensely impatient to reach the capital, hoping that the company of the young man's associates and the pleasures and occupations of the great city would have the desired effect.

The journey was made in almost complete silence. Frederic had no desire for conversation, his heart was with Sister Anne, and he had room for no other thought; his father, meanwhile, was reflecting on the best means of bringing his son to hear reason, and M. Ménard's memory reverted with indignation to all the falsehoods that had been poured out on him by the pretended Polish baron.

The Count, however, with the greatest magnanimity refrained from uttering a single reproach to Frederic, and appeared to have forgotten every

cause for displeasure, and Ménard, who had shrunk sensitively from the severe looks of M. de Montreville, because he knew that his conduct was not irreproachable, began to breathe more freely and dared to lift his head.

On their arrival in Paris, before M. Ménard could say farewell to the Count, Frederic found occasion to speak privately to him and asked him for news of Dubourg. Ménard kept silence for a moment, compressing his lips as if he did not know whether to be offended, and finally answered, with an air which he intended to be malicious, —

"Is it of the Baron Potoski that you wish to have news?"

"Of the Baron, of Dubourg, whatever you call him!"

"My faith, monsieur; I could call him a little impertinent, after all the lies he has told me. To say he was a palatine —"

"Never mind, dear Ménard; forget all that."

"And the King of Prussia's tobacco box!"

"That was just a joke."

"But I counted specially on that Tokay of the cave of Tékély."

"Remember, I was as guilty as he, in allowing him to deceive you."

"It is that which closes my mouth, monsieur. Besides, outside of his thoughtlessness, and his passion for play, he is a man of merit. He is cultured, he knows his classics."

"But what has become of him? Where did you leave him?"

"I left him playing Hippolyte, and coming in search of me to take my part in the scene."

Frederic understanding nothing of this, Ménard explained to him their adventures in the little town, at which any but the young man would have laughed heartily. But Frederic could only realize that Dubourg had been left in great embarrassment, and he could not imagine when he should see him again. This troubled him greatly, for he wished to send Dubourg to Sister Anne, to calm the anxieties of the young girl, and to give her news of himself.

The Count of Montreville gave M. Ménard a reasonable sum when he dismissed him, not for the manner in which he had watched over his son during their journey, but for the time he had lost. Ménard, on saying farewell to his dear pupil, reminded Frederic that he should like to be remembered, in case the latter should recommence his journey around the world.

Several days rolled away after Frederic's return to Paris. The memory of the young mute was with him constantly. He imagined her in the wood, waiting for his arrival, expecting his return, and broken-hearted at his abandonment. Each instant increased his torments and his desire to see Sister Anne. But what could he do? He dared not leave his father. He was without

money, and for the first time the steward had refused his request for funds, by order of the Count, who feared that his son would use the money to recommence his travels, and he did not wish to let him go.

Each day Frederic made the most extravagant plans. He would start on foot, he would run to join his young friend, and conceal himself with her in the depth of the forest. But Sister Anne could not leave Marguerite; they must therefore remain in the wood, and his father would find him easily, for Ménard had told him all.

What should he do? Write? Alas! the poor little girl did not know how to read; she knew nothing except how to love, and that counts for very little in the present century.

Frederic went rarely into society, for it displeased him. Pretty little Madame Dernange recommenced her enticements in vain. He paid not the slightest attention to her. She was piqued by his indifference, and employed all the resources of her coquetry to bring him again to her knees. But Frederic was no longer her dupe. He had known real love, and he recognized the flimsiness of all those sensations of vanity and of passionate excitement which can only be mistaken for love by those who have never experienced a real passion.

The Count treated his son with coldness, but he said not a word of his adventures in Dau-

phiny. On the contrary, he rather avoided the subject. Frederic, who wished to ascertain his father's real feelings, ventured to speak of his stay at Grenoble, of the surroundings of that town, and of the pretty village of Vizille; but his father's only reply was a severe look, which closed his mouth and made it impossible for him to continue. Frederic had already gone twenty times to the various lodgings which Dubourg had occupied when in Paris, but no one had seen him. He sought Ménard and charged him to do everything possible to find Dubourg, thinking that he might have returned, but feared to present himself, because he dreaded to encounter M. de Montreville.

"And if I find him?"

"Send him to me immediately."

"Send him to you? Indeed I will not! Peste! The Count, your father, did not treat him very well when he saw him as Hippolyte. To be sure, the costume was very unbecoming."

"Tell him to write to me. Can't I see him outside, if he is afraid to come to the hotel? Am I to be a prisoner? O Monsieur Ménard, I cannot bear it any longer; every day increases my suffering; I must see her, at least I must have some news of her."

"Some news of whom?"

"Of her whom I adore, of her whom I have been forced to abandon to follow you."

"Oh, I understand: the little one in the wood. M. Dubourg told me you had taken her away and set her up in an establishment."

"Would to God I had, for if I had done so I should now be near her. Oh, dear Monsieur Ménard, if you were another sort of a man! But you are so good, so sympathetic; you love me; you will bring me back to life if you will but go to her and tell her that I love her more than ever."

"I am sorry, Count, but I will not go to her to tell her that or anything else. I will not encourage a passion of which your father disapproves. I have already much to regret in my negligence. I love you infinitely, and for that reason I will not help you to continue a culpable connection, which can lead to nothing. Monsieur, your father knows well what he is doing; he came just in time; we did nothing but foolishness, and I was the worst. His presence reëstablished the equilibrium. He removed you from temptation, which makes you suffer; but it is for the best. Qui bene amat, bene castigat, experto crede Roberto."

Frederic returned home to think of Sister Anne and find a means of seeing her. If he had known she was to be a mother, if he had known that she carried in her breast the pledge of his love, nothing could have kept him in Paris. He would have gone, he would have braved the

anger of his father. But he knew nothing of all this, so he stayed, saying each day, "I will go."

The Count sent for his son to come to him, and Frederic entered his father's presence always with the same melancholy face.

"You do not go into society," the Count said. "Your travels have made you misanthropic."

Frederic was silent. It is better to be so when we do not know what to say.

"I wish you to accompany me this evening," went on the Count. "I am going to see one of my old army friends, General Valmont. He has been living for a long time on his estate in the country, but has now come to spend some time in Paris. He wishes to see you, and I should like to present you to him."

Frederic bowed, and prepared to follow his father; he had often heard him speak of this M. de Valmont, with whom he had been in the war, and who must be a man of about his own age, and found nothing unusual in the fact that his father wanted to present him to his old friend.

They started. The Count of Montreville was more amiable to his son, and Frederic endeavored to be less melancholy. The carriage stopped before the house of the old General. The Count and his son were announced, and M. de Valmont came out to receive them. The first impression of his face was very pleasing; his manner was full of geniality, and his features expressed frank-

ness and gayety; he ran to embrace his old friend, extended his hand to Frederic, pressed his with cordiality, and seemed charmed to see him.

After the first interchange of compliments, the General invited his guests to pass into an adjoining apartment.

"You've shown me your family," said he to the Count, "now I must show you mine. Perhaps you'll be astonished that such an old boy as I should have a family. She's not quite so close to me as yours, but she's just as dear."

As he said this the General led the Count and his son into another room, where a young lady was seated at the piano.

At the entrance of the strangers, she arose hastily.

"Constance," said the General to her, "this is the Count of Montreville and his son. Gentlemen, I wish to present to you my niece, my daughter; for I love her as much as if I were her father."

Constance made a courtesy to the two strangers which was full of grace. Frederic looked at her, and could not find her anything but charming. As to the Count, a smile of contentment irradiated all his features. I believe that the malicious old gentleman had already heard of Mademoiselle Constance, and that in making this little visit to the General with his son he had his own plans. Constance had a beautiful figure, and there was

something sweet and modest in her manner which was very attractive. Blonde, with just a little color in her cheeks, her great blue eyes, shaded by long black lashes, were indescribably charming; her expression was amiable and frank, all her movements were graceful, and she was quite unconscious of her charms; she had no desire to shine, but seemed to shrink from the admiration she aroused.

The two old friends opened the chapter of their wars and the adventures of their youth; and at sixty what a chapter this is! It fell to Frederic, therefore, to entertain the General's niece. However sorrowful a man's heart may be, he does not like to bore a pretty woman, and he makes an effort to forget his sorrows for the moment, so as not to appear too disagreeable. Our young gentleman followed this custom in chatting with Mademoiselle Constance, whom he found very agreeable, and without the least pretension; but it was evident that she was sensible and cultivated, and a great lover of the arts; her candor and modesty diffused a charm over all she said. She was not one of those young ladies who know everything, and who dispute and argue on every point, as so many do nowadays; she was not to be counted among the would-be prodigies who, with surprising assurance, babble for hours on subjects of which they really know nothing. It is the custom to admire them, because we like to

find everything charming that comes from a pretty mouth; but, in reality, they have not even common sense.

God guard us from prodigies, dear reader, especially among women, whose most pleasing qualities are simplicity, modesty and naturalness, — qualities which do not exclude wit and learning, but rather add to them the gentleness which makes such women more attractive than any others.

The young people spoke of painting, of music, and of the country; all at once the General said to his niece, —

"Sing something, Constance. Sit down to the piano, and let us hear you. I love singing, and it will amuse this young man."

Constance did not wait to be asked again, but sat down with much simplicity and sang to her own accompaniment. Her voice was sweet and full of expression, though it lacked volume, but she sang with so much taste that one never tired of listening to her. Frederic was delighted; he had never heard a voice that pleased him so greatly. Constance sang several pieces, until her uncle said to her, —

"That's good; that's very good! You are obedient, and you do not put on any airs. Zounds! how I hate the affectations of young ladies who sing!"

The Count and his son were united in their

praises, and thanked Constance, who blushed at their compliments. They had been fully two hours at the General's house when the Count made his adieux.

"I will come and see you," said his friend. "I have just bought a little country house in the suburbs for mademoiselle, who sets me crazy with her fields and birds! I hope you will come out with your son, before the season is too far advanced."

The Count promised, and entered the carriage with Frederic, to whom he was very careful to say nothing about the General's niece, although the meeting with Constance would naturally have been the subject of a father's conversation; Frederic was not more communicative, for he was thinking anew of the poor little mute of the wood. For two hours he had almost forgotten her. Two hours;—that's a very little thing; but Sister Anne had never forgotten him for a single minute.

Three days after this visit the General came with his niece to dine with the Count of Montreville, who had invited quite a number of guests. When he learned that he was to meet Mademoiselle de Valmont again, Frederic experienced a slight emotion, which he attributed to vexation at being obliged to again conceal his sorrow. But was this the real cause?

The General was as usual gay, frank and un-

affected, his niece pretty, charming, and without pretensions. It is easier to be solitary in a large assemblage than in a small one, and Frederic remained near Constance, believing that he did so simply from courtesy, as it was his duty to pay especial attention to the General's niece; but he could not deny that of all the company Constance was the one who pleased him most, if he could still be pleased. With her one could chat without stopping to think what one must say; one never heard flat epigrams or commonplace phrases from her lips. Constance was not exclusively occupied with the toilets of other women. She did not pass them in review, one after the other, to criticise them, which is ordinarily the principal conversation of a young lady.

With her Frederic felt more free, more at his ease; it seemed to him that he had known her for a long time. She smiled upon him so pleasantly when he approached her, her voice had such a tender intonation, her eyes were so gentle, that it was very natural he should prefer her conversation to that of any of the others; even when he said nothing to her, he felt a secret charm in her presence. Frederic, who made an effort to repress his sadness, wore, nevertheless, a melancholy expression when he was near Constance which was very becoming. Women are often fascinated by such airs. When he was dreaming, Constance looked at him with interest, her eyes seeming to ask,

What makes you suffer? If she spoke to him at such a time, her voice became still sweeter, her manner more kind. A stranger who did not know them would have said she shared his sorrows, or wished to make him forget them.

Several young ladies had exhibited their talents and their voices, accompanying themselves on the harp or on the piano, but Frederic had heard only Mademoiselle de Valmont. She had sung merely a ballad, but she had sung it so well! Frederic regarded her more attentively than he had yet dared to do. Whether it was chance or an illusion of the heart, he found in the features of Constance a great resemblance to those of Sister Anne, — the same sweetness, the same expression; and if the poor orphan could have spoken, it would no doubt have been in a voice as tender and charming as that of Constance.

Frederic, listening to Constance, persuaded himself that he heard Sister Anne, and his eyes filled with tears. Full of this idea, he found a fresh resemblance of feature every moment, and he could not keep his eyes from Mademoiselle de Valmont. When she stopped singing, Frederic was again beside her, and in his glance, as it fell upon her, there was a new tenderness. Constance perceived it, she dropped her eyes, and a vivid scarlet colored her cheeks. But if Frederic saw only a little mute when he looked at Mademoiselle de Valmont so tenderly, would it not

have been more fair to warn her of the object which really occupied him? Otherwise Constance would have a right to believe that the son of the Count of Montreville did not regard her with indifference.

The evening passed very rapidly for Frederic. The General and his niece departed, saying that they were going to their country house the next day; and the former declared that he should await with impatience the coming of the Count and his son.

When Constance had gone, Frederic found himself once more alone in the midst of the company, and as soon as he could disappear he hastened to regain his own apartment, to think of — Constance? Oh, no, no: of Sister Anne! It was always the poor little one who occupied his thoughts, but was it his fault if sometimes the memory of Mademoiselle de Valmont mingled with that of the young mute? That arose from the resemblance that existed between them. A loving heart finds that which it adores everywhere, sees the beloved object where it is not, loves it in another who recalls the dear image. That is why it is no safer to trust sentimental people than frivolous ones.

Several days elapsed; Frederic had no news of Dubourg, who probably had not yet returned to Paris. The young count remained sorrowful and pensive, but a certain sweetness began to

mingle with his melancholy. The memory of Sister Anne often made him sigh. He wished eagerly to see her again, but he no longer formed the extravagant plans which had seemed so easy of execution on his first return to Paris. He wished to bring happiness to Sister Anne, to make certain of her peace and felicity; but he thought of the future, and he was more than ever certain that his father would never consent to give her to him for a wife. He said to himself sometimes, "What shall we do? What will be the end of this liaison? One cannot always live in a wood; man is made for society, and Sister Anne could not be presented there, for she is ignorant of all that it is indispensable one should know."

Poor little girl! Why did he not think of all this when he saw you for the first time on the border of the brook? But then you seemed to him charming, just as you were; your ignorance rendered you even more interesting in his eyes; and now? Hm! I repeat, men of feeling are no better than the others.

One morning the Count proposed a visit to the General's country house, and Frederic, always at his father's orders, took a little more pains than usual with his toilet. Even if one does not care to please, one does not wish to be an object of repulsion. The Count, who took note of the least important acts of his son, experienced a secret satisfaction, which, however, he did not allow to

appear, and he spoke no more of Mademoiselle de Valmont than of any other person.

The General's country house was in the neighborhood of Montmorency, the travellers arriving there about noon. As he left the carriage, Frederic felt his heart beat more quickly, and he attributed this to the pleasure of seeing again a woman who recalled the features of the one he loved. He was indeed much moved, and when he entered the house he looked everywhere for Mademoiselle de Valmont, but he saw only the General, who gave them a most hospitable welcome.

"You must remain here some days," he said; "I have you, and I shall not let you go sooner. We will talk, we will laugh, we will hunt, we will entertain, — my niece will give us music, — indeed we shall pass the time more gayly than we think."

Frederic's eyes were searching for this niece whom he did not see; and as the General and his father had already begun their campaigns, which would keep them busy a long time, he ventured to ask news of her.

"She is in the garden, no doubt," said the General, "with her aviary, or her flowers, or her belvedere. Go on, go on, young man. Find her. By Jove, it's your affair! At your age a pretty face would have made me run from Paris here."

Frederic profited by the permission, descended into a garden, which seemed very beautiful, and,

walking on at hazard, looked everywhere for Mademoiselle Constance. He passed near the aviary, but she was not there; he plunged into a path shaded by lindens, at the end of which there was a rise in the ground, and a winding path leading to a platform, from which a charming landscape was to be seen. This was no doubt what the General called the belvedere, for Constance was seated there, holding on her knees a drawing tablet, on which she was sketching the view of the lovely valley which one could see from this point. She did not perceive Frederic's arrival, having turned her back to the path leading to the belvedere; and the young man approached and leaned over her shoulder before she roused from her occupation.

"Have you all the talents?" he said to her.

Constance lifted her head; she saw him, and a sentiment of pleasure was depicted in her eyes, while her bosom heaved a little more quickly. She prepared to lay aside her drawing.

"Please go on," said Frederic; "I did not come to interrupt your studies; I want to share them. Besides, your uncle wishes us to remain here several days, — you must not let our presence change any of your habits."

"And will it be a pleasure to you to stay here for some time?" asked Constance, with a little tremble in her voice.

"Of course. I am sure my father could not

have refused his old friend. He is too happy with him."

"But you, monsieur, who have not the same reason for enjoyment in these regions,—I am afraid you will soon be wearied and regret the pleasures of Paris. We receive very few people here; you may be bored."

"You judge me very ill, if you think I could be bored near you."

"Oh, pardon me. I said that for fear—but in fact, if you are fond of outdoor life, drawing, music and reading, you will be very happy in the country."

Frederic made no response; he was looking attentively at Constance, and his heart was oppressed by a thousand different sentiments,—he saw again in her features an ever-loved image. He was transported in thought to the little wood on the borders of the brook; a shadow of sadness darkened his brow; a profound sigh escaped from his bosom. It was only at the end of several minutes that he appeared to rouse from his dream, and then he answered Constance's question.

"Oh, yes; I love the country very much."

The young lady regarded him with astonishment, and smiled; then, seeing that he said nothing more, she went back to her drawing, wishing to continue her landscape; but the presence of Frederic caused her a certain embarrassment;

her hand trembled as she held her pencil, and she hardly knew what she did.

Frederic continued to gaze at her in silence, admiring her grace, her bearing, and her gracious and dignified air. If Sister Anne had received an education, she would have been like her, she would have had her figure, her talents, and she would have expressed herself just as well. He began to discover that, instead of lessening the charms and attractions of a woman, education adds another gift.

The conversation languished between these young people, for Frederic fell often into his reveries, although in spite of that the time passed quickly. They enjoyed being together, and that was sufficient. As to Frederic, he would have passed the entire day looking at Constance and making comparisons, and, while the young lady perceived that he gazed at her without ceasing, yet Frederic's eyes were so sweet, there was something so tender, so touching, in their expression, that no woman could be angry at his look.

The arrival of the two old friends roused the young people from this situation, which they had enjoyed without caring to confess it to themselves. The General was showing the Count all the beauties of the garden, the belvedere being one of them; and there, as he approached, the Count was delighted to observe a certain emotion,

a certain excitement, which contributed not a little to his pleasure, and which the General did not see. He was not so observing as his friend.

"Dear niece," said the General, "here are two guests who have just arrived. Try to do the honors so well that they will not want to leave us for a long time."

"I will do my best," said Constance, blushing.

"Mademoiselle," said the Count, "when we see you here we cannot but wish to remain."

Frederic said nothing, but he looked at Constance, who threw him a furtive glance, while thanking the Count, to see if he shared his father's sentiments.

After dinner two neighbors came in to see the General, one a great billiard player who never slept till he had played his game; the other, who was a little younger and had served in the army, spared no one his campaign stories, which he intermingled with compliments and gallantries for Mademoiselle de Valmont.

Frederic left these gentlemen to play billiards, preferring to remain with Constance, and hear her sing or play the piano.

"Do not trouble yourself to keep me company," she said; "remember, we are not in Paris."

"If it does not displease you," said Frederic, "I prefer to stay with you."

Constance smiled and was plainly not displeased. The most amiable liberty reigned in the country,

and especially at the General's house. During the day each one did as he pleased. Often the Count and his friend went for a promenade in the neighborhood, Frederic remaining with Constance, when they passed a large part of the day in the garden.

"We must enjoy the last beautiful days," said Constance; "winter will come and I shall have to say farewell to my trees, my flowers and my birds. But I shall see them again; the farewell is not eternal."

"Shall you not return to your uncle's estate?"

"Oh, no! I like this house much better. He bought it for me, and he will allow me to pass seven months of the year here. The winter we shall spend in Paris. My uncle is so good, he does everything I wish because he loves me."

"And who could help loving you —"

Frederic did not finish; he stopped as if vexed at what he had said, and Constance, surprised, dropped her eyes and was silent; but she began to grow accustomed to the oddities of the young man. Sometimes, when he remained long near her without saying a word, she was tempted to ask what troubled him; but she did not dare, and she was silent and sighed also, though she did not know why. Melancholy is a dangerous evil, and it grows rapidly between two young people of the opposite sex. Often hours of silence are more dangerous than a conversation of which gallantry is the subject.

Each day a more tender intimacy was established between Frederic and Constance, and before a week had passed they had become friends; they had lost that tone of conventional compliment which is that of the world, but never that of love and of friendship; they had lost their reserve and fear of each other. The Count spoke of returning to Paris, and Frederic was astonished that he had not thought of it, the week had passed so quickly. When he did think about it he was almost angry; he was remorseful because he had been happy, but remorse never comes until after the thing is done. Then he said to himself, "No, I have not forgotten Sister Anne; I see her constantly in Constance. I think of her when I see the sweet features of Mademoiselle de Valmont, I believe myself near her when I am seated near Constance, and I experience a delicious emotion."

It was probably because he was thinking of Sister Anne that Frederic became a little more sentimental; and on the evening of the day before he was to return to Paris with his father, when Frederic was seated in the garden with Constance, he took her hand and held it a long time in his. Constance did not withdraw her hand, but lowered her eyes and appeared deeply moved. Frederic kept silence, pressing her hand tenderly, and, perhaps without thinking, the gentle girl returned this sign of tenderness.

The young man was agitated anew; he dropped the hand he held, and started quickly from Constance. She lifted her head, and, remarking his agitation, smiled with that charm which holds, which enchants. Then she said, —

"You are going tomorrow?"

Frederic approached, and stammered, —

"I must! I should have gone before perhaps, and yet — it is she — I see her always! Oh, if I could be with you constantly! I am so happy, so happy here — ah, pardon me, mademoiselle! I do not know what I am saying."

Constance did not understand much of this discourse, but lovers often do not know what they are talking about. His speech was incoherent, but she pardoned him gladly, because she interpreted it according to her heart. This told her that Frederic adored her, and enabled her to understand his incoherence, for in love the eyes speak as well as the tongue.

The Count took his son to Paris, and never uttered a word concerning Constance. Ah, Count, you were tactful, and you knew well what you were doing. Only a few days had rolled away, before Frederic said he ought to profit by the last fine weather to make a little visit to the General's country-seat. He burned to see Constance — in order to think of Sister Anne?

CHAPTER V

Lunel, Dubourg, and Madelon

We left Dubourg preparing to start on his way back to Paris. On this occasion, however, he did not travel in the guise of a Polish nobleman, but went modestly on foot, balancing his cane in his hand as though he were setting out for a simple promenade. The carrying of his luggage caused him no inconvenience, because he had his entire wardrobe on his back, which facilitated his progress when travelling afoot. The houses and grounds which he passed on his way had never before seemed so desirable, so enticing, so magnificent. He passed close to M. Chambertin's mansion and greeted that hospitable dwelling with a sigh, that was not for its mistress, but for the old Pommard in the cellar, and for the entertainment afforded by its generous larder.

Nevertheless he hastened quickly past it, for he was still afraid of meeting that confounded Durosey, whose unforeseen and unwelcome appearance had seemed to be the signal for all the misfortunes which had since fallen upon him. Soon afterwards he entered a little path which led to the highway, and Dubourg found himself almost face to face

with old Lunel, who was returning home leading a donkey loaded with various articles which he had purchased at Grenoble. Dubourg hastened to pull his hat down over his eyes and walked with his head lowered, for he did not care to be recognized by M. Chambertin's jockey; but as he went on he stumbled against the donkey and almost overturned it.

"Can't you see, imbecile?" cried Lunel. "The road's wide enough, and you fall over my donkey."

Dubourg had never liked the old jockey, for during his stay with M. Chambertin the man had never lost an opportunity of being disagreeable to Ménard as well as to him; and he had not forgotten the beating Lunel had given his little Poles. All this was in his mind, and at the word "imbecile" he turned and gave the old jockey three blows across the thighs with his knotted stick. Lunel struck back and shouted, "Help! help! thieves!"

The movement Dubourg had made pushed up his hat, and the old domestic recognized his features. He began to cry loudly, —

"It's that scoundrel palatine, who owes four hundred francs for his meals. It's that false baron that made madame see roman candles, and monsieur, crescents. Peste! he's not so gay as he was."

"Shut up, idiot!" cried Dubourg, lifting his cane again over Lunel.

"But why do you beat me?"

"I'm only returning what you gave to my people; I've owed you that for some time."

"Your people! your people! They were a fine lot. That's the little fee you give me because my master kept you for a month, and your old savant, that ate like six."

"If I have done your master the honor to visit him, what business is that of yours, dunce? What have you to say about it?"

"Yes, you did him a great honor — you did!"

"Take care or I'll begin again!"

Dubourg held up his cane. The old jockey decided to settle down. He was silent, and looked all about for his donkey, to continue his journey. The animal had disappeared while the dispute went on between the gentlemen; it had penetrated into the thicket that bordered the road, and could not be seen.

"O good Lord! where's my donkey? where's my donkey?" cried Lunel, searching every clump of shrubbery with much anxiety.

"My faith! I don't know; look for your donkey, and I'll continue my journey. You will take my compliments to your mistress, and you will tell your master that if he ever comes to see me in Paris, I'll give him a little reception in fireworks."

Lunel did not hear a word that Dubourg said. He ran from right to left of the road, calling,

"Madelon! hi there, Madelon!" He plunged into a covered path; Dubourg lost sight of him, and started again on his own journey, laughing over his adventure.

About half an hour after he had left Lunel, he reached the end of a road leading to a level tract of ground, and as he emerged from the path he saw Madelon, not twenty steps from him. She went on at a gentle trot, with her burden on her back, following freely whichever road she pleased, and stopping occasionally to take a mouthful of thistle or wild blackberries.

"By the Lord! here's a singular adventure!" said Dubourg. "Was this animal sent me by providence? Take care, however; justice might not approve of the gifts of providence. But I haven't carried off this donkey. Is it my fault if it has left its master? However, I'll begin by trying to restore it."

Dubourg returned a few steps into the wood he had just left, and began to call with all his force,—

"Lunel! Hullo! Lunel! Here's your donkey!"

No one responded. Dubourg's shouting was useless. Weary of calling, he returned toward the donkey, saying to himself,—

"It seems as if I had done all I could, and my conscience is a little easier. I can't go back half a league. I've no desire to present myself

again to my friend Chambertin; he's no longer my friend. Let's see what this donkey carries. Probably there's nothing very precious."

Dubourg began the inventory of the two baskets, which were covered with a thick gray cloth. In one he found two syringes, one a patent affair, labelled "For madame," and the other a plain one, labelled "For monsieur." There was a large box containing several phials, and some tiny pasteboard boxes.

"Oh, oh!" cried Dubourg; "have I found an apothecary's shop? But there's a big paper; oh, it's the receipted bill. That will give me all the items.

"Let's see; furnished by Dardanus, apothecary at Grenoble, for Madame Chambertin. Ah, let's see now; here's opiate for the teeth, salve for the gums, three pots of superfine rouge, liquid almond paste, Macassar oil for tinting the hair, bear's grease to prevent its falling, extract of philocome to soften it, essence of Venus to beautify the skin, liquid rouge to color it, and vegetable blue to make veins.

"By Jove!" cried Dubourg; "it's fortunate I didn't find this bill a month ago, for I never should have had the courage to say all those pretty things to Madame Chambertin. Let's go on: laxative pastilles, emollient pills, and quieting pastilles. The devil! All that for madame! Two pounds of health chocolate — ah, well, that's

better! Now let's see about monsieur. Three hundred cathartic pills! O you rascal! that's what gives you such a fresh color! Three bottles of Barége water, corn salve, ointment for the nails, cachous, mint, parsley preserve, astringent pills, tonic tablets. It is evident that monsieur also takes medicine. That's all. Let's see the other basket."

He found first a perruque, freshly curled and frizzed, which madame no doubt wore on the days when she had not time to arrange her hair. Then there was a wooden head, serving to support the wig when it was not in use. He found, last of all, a pair of riding-boots and some deer-skin gloves.

"My faith! I shan't return to Allevard for the sake of pills and syringes," said Dubourg, after he had finished his inventory. "Monsieur and madame will wait several days for the articles they are expecting. I take possession, though I don't know what I shall do with all these drugs. Eh? What an idea! Heavens! there's a way of using this shop, and I could travel without touching my purse, which is not very well filled. Who knows but I might make my fortune? Good! The die is cast! I have been a baron, a palatine, a comedian; I have even been a beast, without intending it. I will now be a quack doctor; it is the easiest trade, and the simplest rôle to play, if one has a little wit, audacity, and an ability for

chattering, all of which I possess. So here I am now, a quack doctor, a charlatan! Yes, who is not one, in this world? Each plays the game in his own fashion, — men in place with office-seekers, speculators with capitalists, knaves with fools, wealthy men with women, coquettes with their lovers, debtors with creditors, authors with actors, librarians with readers, and merchants with all the world!

"As for me, I am a universal healer; and I can prevent and divine all ills! Besides, I am a second Cagliostro; I have a complete pharmacy; I have no rival; I work without fraud; I have discovered a thousand secrets, one of which would make a man's fortune; and I sell pills for two sous, because I am a philanthropist."

Dubourg was quite decided on this new folly, and he entered a dense coppice with the donkey. There he began by taking off his palatine shoes, which were somewhat worn, and replacing them by the great riding-boots, which came half way up his thighs. He did not wish the salve doctor to be recognized as the Baron Potoski. He buried his head in the blonde wig of Madame Chambertin, after he had taken pains to knot the hair in the back, so that it would look like a Prussian queue. He daubed his cheeks, his forehead and chin, with madame's superfine rouge. He mounted the crupper of Madelon, held the two baskets before him, which contained his itin-

erant drugstore, and started on his way. He pricked forward his courser with his cane, which served as a switch.

The singular appearance of Dubourg attracted the attention of all the villagers. His face was shaded by beautiful blonde curls; his long queue fell upon his back, his great boots were turned down, because the baskets pinched him terribly. Everyone called to the other to look as he passed. The peasants ran to their doors and windows to see him, and he generally had a string of boys in his rear. Dubourg bowed to right and left, with an air of great benevolence, and shouted in a loud voice, —

"Friends, are you sick? Have you toeache, earache? Have you bad dreams? Do you have trouble in sleeping? Have you nightmare? Have you had a stroke? Are you blind, deaf, paralyzed? Come on; seize the opportunity! I am the great restorer, the great healer, the great operator! Don't fail to profit by my stay in this country! I shall not return again for thirty years, and it is probable I shall not find all of you then. Come, friends; I heal everything, I do everything, even to curing family troubles. I don't pull teeth, but I have a water which makes them fall out, and that amounts to the same thing."

Peasants are naturally credulous. After this discourse, some of them approached Dubourg,

and when they had respectfully removed their hats, or made a reverence, they began to tell their troubles. When the assembly was numerous, Dubourg drew from his basket his mechanical syringe, which he had filled with Barége water. Then he syringed the crowd. The villagers were obliged to hold their noses, but they stayed, for the marvellous syringe played the air, "Avec les jeux dans le village," and Dubourg said,—

"Children, this magic syringe was given to me by the favorite sultana of the Sultan of Egypt. It plays three hundred airs, but it has its caprices, and today it will only play one. This marvellous water which comes from it,—and it doesn't smell of essence of rose!—is a prompt and sovereign remedy for women who have the colic. I give these remedies sometimes myself, but I must choose the person, for this syringe does not go with all faces."

After this lecture, Dubourg heard the complaints of each. He distributed drugs at hazard, but sold them with assurance, promising immediate results from their effects. He gave a nurse some almond paste, to a feverish patient some cachous; for a cold he gave some pills he had made of the corn salve. For asthma he prescribed Macassar oil; for consumption, bear's grease, and for stomach ache he gave some liquid rouge. After this fine prank, he spurred Madelon and endeavored to get as far as possible from his

invalids. Indeed, he was scarcely half a league away before the poor people began to feel the effects of his remedies. Some grasped their stomachs, others were nauseated; these felt a violent headache, those could not endure the taste of the drug they had swallowed. Others ran after the doctor, whom they threatened with a rope's end. But the doctor did not wait for them. It was fortunate that he had prudence enough to distribute his remedies in very small quantities, so that they could not have fatal consequences. Dubourg took pains to heal no one in the neighborhood where he ate or slept. As he travelled he could not go faster than forty leagues in two weeks, for the great healer must pause to do his business, and his charger could only move at a very slow trot. Dubourg found himself one day before a farm of considerable size. For some time he had sold nothing. The nearer he approached the city, the less credulity he encountered. His fortune had not increased, for he ate regularly in the evening what he had gained during the day. When the receipts were good he had a feast, satisfied if he did not encroach on his reserve.

The appearance of the farm tempted Dubourg to stop there. As he had no trumpet or hunting-horn, he made use of his mechanical syringe to announce himself, and he accompanied himself by beating time on the wooden head. The farm

people came out. Among those who appeared, Dubourg noticed a young girl, rosy and fresh, with a bright eye and a tiny foot, of whom he had a great desire to become the physician.

Several stout girls in the lower court bought some salves for fevers and other ills. Different peasants received lozenges of mint or cachou for toothache. But all regarded with astonishment this marvellous syringe that made music, and the wooden head, which the operator declared spoke when it stormed.

The pretty peasant girl was the daughter of the farmer, who was then absent. With her was her aunt, an old lady who believed in dreams, visions, cards, magic, talismans and sorcerers. She consulted Dubourg because for three days she had gone to sleep on her back and had awakened on her stomach, and this seemed very extraordinary.

"I will give you something which will prevent your changing your position," he said to the old lady, while he ogled the young one. "Here are some pastilles which came to me from the coast of Guinea, from a native who slept sometimes eight days in succession on the left ear. After taking it moderately, you pass a delicious night and have charming dreams,—divine dreams, such as one has at fifteen years. It is so delightful that one does not wish to wake up. Finally, dear lady, when you have taken this you are

certain to dream of any person you choose; you only need to walk around your water pitcher three times before retiring."

"Oh, dear monsieur!" said the old lady, "give me those pastilles, quick! I will eat one every night, and tonight I wish to dream of my first husband, who was very amiable and not a drunkard like the second. I will make the tour of the pitcher, monsieur, and I shall not fail!"

Dubourg gave the old lady a box of laxative pills, which she received with gratitude. Then he asked the pretty niece what he could do for her.

"Goodness, monsieur!" said the farmer's daughter, "eight days ago I danced with Thomas, and I fell, and turned my wrist, and it hasn't been the same since. Have you something that will cure it?"

"Have I something, my dear child! Why, I have everything! In a quarter of an hour all your trouble will be gone, and it will never appear again! I have only to rub you with a certain ointment; but it is also necessary for me to say some magic words, and I cannot pronounce them before a witness, for that would destroy the charm. Take me now to your chamber, or to some other place where we can be alone, and I will operate."

"Shall I do it, aunt?" asked the farmer's daughter.

"Why, of course!" cried the good woman. "Profit by the good will of this good man and let him rub you."

The young girl made no more difficulties, but begged Dubourg to follow her. The doctor fastened his donkey and all his shop at the gate of the farm, and followed swiftly the pretty farmer's daughter. She led him to her little room and pushed the door to after her. She trusted herself with confidence to the science of the sorcerer, who seemed to her more comic than frightful.

On her side, the aunt was in a great hurry to enjoy the effect of the medicine, and had not the patience to wait till night to dream of her first husband. So she retired to her room, and, after she had swallowed a pill and performed the necessary ceremony, she went to bed, and awaited with impatience the effect of the charm, which did not announce itself by miracles.

While the ladies were making use of Dubourg's specifics, the farmer returned home. He began by asking about the donkey, which he saw at his gate, and was told that it belonged to the great healer, who had just arrived. He then inquired as to the identity of the great healer, of whom the farm hands said they knew nothing; but he was probably a sorcerer, for he had curled hair like a woman, a long queue, immense boots, a syringe which made you dance, and a wooden head that spoke when it stormed.

The farmer was unfortunately one of those men who do not believe in sorceries, charms or magic. He wished to see with his eyes, hear with his ears. He could not get it into his head that a black fowl will make the devil appear; or that one can read the future in a sheep's liver, in coffee grounds, or in boiling lead thrown into water. These men are the destruction of the occult sciences.

Then, impatient at the peasants' stories, he asked where the great healer had gone, and someone said he had seen the sorcerer go into the house with the aunt and the young lady. The farmer hastened to the widow's chamber, and found her in bed, expecting the delicious dream which had not yet arrived.

"O brother! what have you done?" she said to him. "You have disturbed me; you have upset me entirely! The dream came, I saw my first husband; we went to gather nuts together. Go away! You prevent the effect of the medicine I have taken, and I owe it to this wonderful man who has just come."

"Good Lord!" cried the farmer, "will you never have done with your tales and foolishness? Where has this sorcerer gone? He may steal my rabbits."

"What an idea! He is with your daughter in her room; he is saying an incantation to heal her hand."

"Shut up with my daughter!" cried the farmer; "I'll see about that!" and he ran to the little one's chamber, without waiting to hear the conclusion of the old lady's complaint. The farmer kicked the door open, and doubtless he was not satisfied at the incantation which the healer was making over his daughter, for he seized a broom and began his expostulation with several stout blows. Dubourg had not time to introduce himself; he yelled — and fled! The young girl wept, her father swore, and the whole house was in an uproar.

Our doctor saw the farm hands arming themselves with clubs, to follow the example of their master, and he thought only of his safety. He fled from the farm, abandoning his donkey, his syringes, and all his remedies, which was very fortunate for the sick people who lived upon the route he had still to travel.

CHAPTER VI

Love is Always the Strongest

Dubourg arrived in Paris at last, having spent a month and several days in travelling less than twenty leagues; but this was not a very long period if one considers the marvellous cures he had made and the numerous adventures in which he had participated on the way.

When he had fled from the farm where his last miracle had been so poorly recompensed, he had been careful enough to throw away the blond perruque with the great queue, for this it was which had continually attracted the train of dirty little boys after him.

He arrived in the capital rather dirty and bedraggled, and somewhat exhausted, but he was there at last, in undaunted spirits, and he at once hastened to his former apartment, which he had given up on leaving Paris, but where he had left a pair of trousers in the care of the portress, a good-natured woman who had a good deal of consideration for the good-for-nothing dare-devil fellows, such as Dubourg, because as a rule they were more generous than rational and well-to-do people.

The concierge gave him, with his trousers, a great sealed package, which he hesitated to open, fearing that it might contain a subpœna or a judgment; he did not allow an attachment to worry him. Breaking the seal, he read a letter, and joy was painted upon his countenance, although he apparently felt that he ought to weep at the same time; but he was too happy to be able to accomplish it, and gave it up as a bad job.

"My dear Madame Benoit," he said to the concierge, "you have often heard me speak of my honored aunt in Brittany, who sometimes sent me money."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, she is dead, Madame Benoit; this fine woman is no more."

"O mon Dieu! what a misfortune!"

"Certainly. But I am her only heir. It is not a great fortune, but it is enough to live on modestly, especially if one is a sage and a philosopher."

"And what did she die of, monsieur?"

"Oh, as to that, I will tell you another time; they are waiting for me in Brittany, and I must go immediately."

"Monsieur, your friend, M. Frederic, has sent to inquire for you several times since you have been gone."

"I will see him on my return. The inheritance must be looked after; that is the most important

matter at present. One must attend to his own affairs before he thinks of those of other people. Adieu, Madame Benoit, adieu! Wait; I make you a present of those trousers, for the news you have given me. You can make a jacket for your little girl out of them. As for me, I shall go as I have come, only I shall not go on foot."

Dubourg ran to the diligence. He still had enough money to pay for his place, and, although he had only a hundred sous left for his meals on the way, he put himself on a diet, promising to make it up later. The old aunt had left all her property to her nephew, whom she believed married and the father of a family. This inheritance would give him almost sixteen hundred livres a year, which was not the income of a baron; but Dubourg could live modestly upon it, especially if he were sensible and economical. These were not his qualities, but like all men he promised to reform and not go beyond his income.

"Monsieur," said the lawyer, who had been intrusted with the matter of the inheritance, "madame, your aunt, made me promise to remind you to be careful of your money, to be faithful to your wife, and to bring up your little twins properly."

"Never fear, monsieur," said Dubourg; "I shall carry out strictly my dear aunt's wishes. My wife and I live like young turtle-doves, and my little twins are like Castor and Pollux."

Dubourg sold the personal effects and property of his aunt, in order to get ready money. All this business kept him nearly two months in Brittany, and it was only at the end of this time that he returned to Paris, dressed in black from head to foot. To indicate his return to sobriety, he began by paying his creditors, and he tried to maintain the reasonable air and quiet, proper manner which he had adopted since he became a man of property.

He thought of Frederic, and did not know whether he ought to write to him or go and see him, when one evening, on entering a café, he saw M. Ménard seated before a domino party and deeply interested in the moves. Dubourg touched him lightly on the arm; M. Ménard turned, recognized his travelling companion, and evidently did not quite know how to receive him.

"Surely, it is dear M. Ménard that I have the pleasure of seeing," said Dubourg, smiling.

"The same, Monsieur de — Monsieur — really, I don't know exactly what to call you," and the tutor smiled, delighted with the joke he had just made.

"What, Monsieur Ménard! You have a grudge against me?"

"Indeed, I ought to have, monsieur, after all the tales you made me believe; and if I ever believe you again —"

"Never mind, Monsieur Ménard; let us leave rancor to malicious people. It can't be said of us, Nec ipsa mors odium illorum internocinum exstinxit."

"Yes; I know well that you are very learned," said the tutor, softening; "but that castle of Krapach, and then to make me go on the stage!"

"Will you accept a demi-tasse and a little glass of liqueur des Iles?"

"Very well, if you wish it."

The tutor said to himself as he followed Dubourg to a table, "This devil of a man has a logic which wins you over, carries you along; it is impossible to remain angry with him."

"Where do you come from?" he asked Dubourg. "My pupil has looked for you everywhere in Paris, and wants to see you."

"I have just come from my property in Brittany."

"Ah, you are from Brittany! I am not surprised that you mixed so much of it with your descriptions of Poland; and then the butter and cheese that you were always talking of."

"Ah, they are excellent, Monsieur Ménard!"

"And what have you been doing in Brittany?"

"I have just inherited a pretty little property from my aunt."

"I'll wager that's not true."

"Ah, Monsieur Ménard, don't you see that I am in mourning?"

"That proves nothing. You had dressed yourself as a Polish nobleman when I gave you my arm in the streets of Lyons. Ah, when I think of that!"

"Do you remember, too, the delicious dinners that I ordered for you?"

"No doubt, no doubt. Oh, you order a dinner perfectly! But that poor M. Chambertin! to make him believe he was receiving an illustrious personage!"

"Listen now, Monsieur Ménard; I think I am just as good as anybody."

"And to give fêtes in your honor, and fireworks, and superb dinners!"

"Where you filled your place also."

"I went there in good faith; I was your accomplice without suspecting it. Do you know that you compromised me? And that is very wrong."

"What do you say to a light glass of punch?"

"Oh, I am afraid —"

"We can have it very sweet."

"Very well, if it is sweet."

"Waiter, some punch!"

"Indeed, my friend, I am not of your age, and the follies that are pardoned to youth are not excusable at a more mature time of life."

"You speak like Cicero, but I reply that Cato learned to dance at sixty."

"Are you very sure of that?"

"I am sure that our follies have been very moderate. Let us drink!"

"I know that, after all, they have done no harm to anyone. It is good, — the punch; it is very good. But when you made me run across all those fields, on account of your make-believe Turks — "

"Oh, my faith! it was a creditor; and those fellows, — aren't they Turks to their poor debtors? Let us drink!"

"It is true that creditors — but look here, dear Dubourg; you have all the qualities of a charming fellow. You know the good authors, you know history; believe me, you should settle down, turn over a new leaf — "

"I have! it is finished! No more play; no more nonsense, no more excess at eating! But we are not drinking!"

"To your health, my dear friend!"

"No more idle yarns, no more lies!"

"Yes, yes; no more lies especially, because lies destroy confidence. And as for me, they made me appear an imbecile."

"Oh, not at all!"

"You have a very pretty stone in that setting."

"It is an emerald that belonged to Ali Pasha."

"It is magnificent."

"One more glass!"

"This brave Dubourg! My friend, I am very

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happy to have renewed my acquaintance with you."

The liqueur and the punch had greatly softened M. Ménard, who left Dubourg at last, calling him his dear friend, and assuring him that he might venture to go to the hotel, that M. le Comte de Montreville wished it, and would be glad to see him.

The day after this meeting Dubourg called upon Frederic, who had just returned from the General's house. The young man passed all his time with Mademoiselle de Valmont, and no longer needed that his father should accompany him when he visited the General, the old gentleman treating him like a son. Frederic profited by this liberty; every day he found for himself a pretext for going to see Constance, for he wished to delude himself, nor would he acknowledge the true state of the case, preferring to tell himself that love had nothing to do with the sentiment that drew him to the General's niece.

He still thought of Sister Anne, but it was not with the same ardor, the same tenderness, as formerly, although he would not confess it to himself. Perhaps if he could see her again he would still feel an inexpressible sweetness when he pressed her in his arms. She did not reign in his thoughts any longer; Constance reigned there in her stead, — Constance, who became for him each day more tender, more lovable, more sympathetic;

who felt such pleasure in seeing him, and who did not try to conceal it. A tender intimacy was already established between them. When Mademoiselle de Valmont did not see Frederic for several days, she reproached him gently, she confessed that she was wearied in his absence, and she said this with an expression so candid and sincere that Frederic was deeply touched. He had never yet said a word of love to her; but is it always necessary to speak to make one's self understood, and what woman in Constance's place would not have believed herself loved?

When he saw Dubourg, Frederic started a little with surprise, and an observer would have said even with embarrassment.

"Here I am," said Dubourg; "I am not more than a week in Paris."

"Yes,—I thought you were still away. But why this mourning?"

"Ah, my friend! my poor aunt! She is no more!"

Here Dubourg drew out his handkerchief, and blew his nose five or six times in succession.

"Come now, Dubourg, put up your handkerchief; you know you won't shed any tears."

"After all, she was a very fine woman. She left me an income of sixteen hundred livres."

"That's something; but don't lose it all at play."

"Oh, what are you talking about? Écarté is

like medicine to me! But you,—tell me the news of your love affairs. Do you know you don't look much downcast for an unhappy lover."

"But I—You know I went to Grenoble to get news of you, and my father, who had just arrived in search of me, took me away, and since then I have not seen that poor little girl. We left so hurriedly, and since that time what could I do? Write? Who would read my letters? We could not use this means, and I do not know how to get news."

"Well, then, I'll give you some."

"You've seen her?"

"Yes, but it was a long time ago. It was about a fortnight after you left."

"Where was she? What was she doing?"

"Where was she? In the wood, of course, returning from the road, from which, no doubt, she hoped to see you coming. What was she doing? She was weeping; I think that is her only resource now."

"She wept!"

"Yes, and I confess she gave me the blues."

"Poor child! But you spoke to her, she saw you? Tell me everything."

"She saw me, she even recognized me, though she had seen me only once. You had not told me she was a mute, but I understood it easily from her signs. She counted the days of your absence, and asked if you would return; and I told her yes."

"Ah, you did well."

"But that was three months ago!"

"That is true; I have not been able—"

"Well, I left her, after I had given her hope; I couldn't give her anything else, and I should think in three months that would have vanished."

Dubourg said nothing more, and Frederic continued for some time sorrowful and pensive. After a while he addressed his friend:—

"Do you know, Dubourg, a surprising thing has happened to me?"

"If you tell me I shall know."

"It is truly inconceivable! It is like fate! When I returned to Paris I found Sister Anne again!"

"You found her here?"

"Yes, I saw her in another woman,—in the niece of General Valmont, an old comrade of my father. Ah, dear friend, it is an astonishing thing! Never have I seen a more perfect resemblance."

"Ah, I begin to understand."

"If you could see Constance (that is the name of the General's niece), you would be as surprised as I have been,—not, perhaps, all at once, but when you knew her well."

"Oh, it has been a surprise in crescendo?"

"Their eyes have the same sweetness, the same expression; those of Constance may be a little darker. Her hair is the same color, and her brow is just as noble and gracious; they have the same

complexion, although Constance is less pale than Sister Anne, and there is the same expression of feature."

"I am astonished that the niece of a general should have the same features as a goatherd."

"Of course there is the difference which comes from position, education and the customs of society; besides which, Constance is much taller, of a charming figure. She is very well made, but so is Sister Anne. Constance has the grace, the bearing, that one cannot get living in the depth of a wood."

"Ah, you have found that out!"

"Finally, she has a charming voice, a perfectly enchanting voice, which penetrates to the bottom of the heart! Well, dear friend, when I hear it, I believe that the poor orphan is not mute; I imagine that I am listening to her; I am sure her voice would have the same sweetness, the same fascination, and so I am deeply moved whenever I hear this voice."

"I don't know whether such an emotion would give great pleasure to Sister Anne."

"Oh, it is impossible not to feel it. Tell me, isn't this resemblance very singular?"

"Very singular, no doubt; nevertheless, it might not be so striking to my eyes. I am no longer astonished at your leaving the little one in the wood. You find her again here, you see her, you hear her, the latter a delight which you did

not have in the wood. You can study her at your ease every day; she has here graces and talents that she did not have there; it is very convenient. Accept my compliments. I see you do not need to trouble yourself about Sister Anne, who is far away. Let her stay in her cottage or on the mountain. What if she does look for your coming, since you find her again near at home without troubling yourself, and she is more beautiful, more fascinating."

There was an irony in Dubourg's tone, an accent of reproach that made Frederic drop his eyes.

"No, no," he said, with embarrassment; "I will not abandon Sister Anne; of course I will go to see her; I will find her. I have not forgotten her, for I think of her all the time. Is it my fault if I discover all her traits in another woman? Is it not, on the contrary, a proof that she is constantly in my mind? But indeed, it is surprising Mademoiselle de Valmont resembles her so closely, in spite of some slight differences. She is so sweet, so good! Her voice always brings tears to my eyes. Ah, I wish you could see Constance."

Dubourg made no reply, and for some moments the friends kept silence. At length Dubourg broke it.

"Really, Frederic, I wish I hadn't seen that little girl again, crying and looking for you."

"Why so?"

"Ah, why? Because, in spite of my carelessness, I can't forget her. I feel — well, it gives me the blues. I'm only a blundering fellow, a stroller, a good-for-nothing, even; but I tell you, I like my way of loving better than yours. With all your fine sentiments, which should never come to an end, but which do end like everything else, you win young hearts and loving women, who, touched by your sighs and your tender speeches, give everything to you and then are left to weep, broken-hearted, over your inconstancy.

"My faith! I only know light women, grisettes, coquettes, who are not worth much; there is more fun in my way. They deceive me, I deceive them, we deceive each other; it's expected, it's accepted: but there are no hearts broken. We cry, and we laugh, and if we quarrel occasionally no one is hurt, no one is unhappy. I confess that these ladies are not of the first virtue, but is it necessary to seek young hearts, which only know love through romantic novels, where love is painted in a very fascinating but a very untrue fashion — should you seek such hearts for the excitement of an intrigue, a caprice? No; on the contrary, I believe it is a barbarous act to endeavor to inspire real love, a grand passion, with no sincere intention. The result is that you leave a broken-hearted victim, to spend her most beautiful days in weeping and despair."

"But why do you say all this to me? I love

Sister Anne; I'm not unfaithful to her. Is it my fault that my father took me away to Paris so suddenly, and that since then I have not been able to go back? Of course I shall see her again; I shall not abandon her. She will always be dear to me."

"Come now, Frederic, do you want me to believe that I have le nez aquilin? I am an old stager; you cannot deceive me; and besides, perhaps I have read your heart better than you have yourself. You do not love Sister Anne any more, or at least you have no passion for her, because you are completely smitten with this charming Constance, who is in every way the image of the poor mute, except that she is a little taller, a little stronger, that her eyes are a little darker, and her complexion different."

"No, Dubourg, no; I swear to you that I am not smitten with Constance. I love her like a brother, but not a word of love has ever passed my lips to her."

"Well, I'll wager it will not be long before it does. Oh, you can raise your eyes to Heaven all you want to. I tell you that you are in love with Mademoiselle Constance. That's not a crime, it is very natural, — this young person is pretty, she pleases you, — nothing better. What I blame you for is that you went to the depths of a wood and hunted up this poor little thing, who had no knowledge of the world or men, and who let you

fascinate her and believed all your oaths, because no one had ever sworn oaths to her before. It was a crime for you to inspire in her an exalted sentiment, which must cause her misery, because in the wood she has nothing to distract her from it. If, under temptation, you had deceived her and left her immediately, the sorrow would have been great, but not so severe; she would not have had time to love you so much. But you always overdo things!

"You abandoned everything to remain in the wood, so as not to be separated from her. For six weeks you did not leave her an instant; you ate nuts, you slept upon the grass, you existed on roots if necessary, in order to talk of love. How the devil could you think that it would not turn her head? She could not let you out of her sight; she lived, she breathed, only in your presence; she supposed this kind of life would last always, when suddenly — bang! monsieur is gone! Well, good evening; it is finished! Weep! Break your heart! You will never see him again!

"But I have seen her, for which I am very sorry, because I can't get her out of my mind, — pale, dishevelled, walking without seeing, listening without hearing, she was absorbed in a single idea. Her eyes overflowed with tears, as she turned them each moment to the road by which Frederic had gone, and entered her cottage still weep-

ing; the next day the same, and always the same; deprived of even the last consolation of the unhappy, — to pour her complaints and sorrows into the ear of a friend! You are the cause of all that; it is not the most pleasing chapter of your history. You could have avoided just such trouble if you had not given way to your romantic notions, or if you had fallen in love with a woman of the world."

Frederic made no reply; he appeared to be thinking deeply.

"Dear friend," said Dubourg, taking his hand, "I have said what I think; I hope you are not angry about it. Besides, all that one says to a man in love does not prevent him from doing what he pleases. I know you can't marry Sister Anne. Good Lord! if we had to marry all the women we have loved, I should have as many wives as Solomon. I only wanted to say that I couldn't help being sorry. But don't let's talk about it. I am your friend just the same, and I am completely at your service. Adieu; I'm going to dine for thirty-two sous, for when you have only sixteen hundred livres a year, and want to keep it, you don't go to Beauvilliers'."

Dubourg had been gone a long time, and Frederic remained buried in his reflections. In spite of himself, a light had been poured upon the state of his heart, and, while he still wished to cherish his illusions, he was obliged to confess

that he was no longer the tender, passionate, faithful lover who would sacrifice everything to pass his days with the young mute.

It is difficult to confess our sins to ourselves, and even when we do acknowledge them, we find some reason to excuse our conduct, and we say to ourselves, "I could not have done otherwise." We reason thus especially in affairs of the heart; and as the latest sentiment is the strongest, it must conquer the previous ones.

Frederic, considering every means of repairing his fault, said to himself, "I will see Sister Anne again, and I will not leave her to pass her life in a miserable hut, deprived of all society; I will buy her a pretty little cottage with a lovely garden, cows and flocks. I will put into this house everything that will occupy her time pleasantly and brighten her life; I will give her a village maiden of her own age to serve her and amuse her; she will live in this retreat with old Marguerite, and there at least she will lack for nothing. Her melancholy will be dissipated by her cheerful surroundings and the cares which will occupy her; I will go to see her sometimes, and she will be happy."

Happy, without Frederic! No, Sister Anne could never be that. Comfort, even wealth, could not compensate her for the loss of her lover. Sister Anne was not reared in Paris, and she could not understand that some women might prefer

diamonds and cashmeres to the joys of love, or to be paid for their falseness with gold. Frederic having forgotten his love in five months, it is not strange that he thought Sister Anne would feel as he did; we judge the hearts of others by our own.

For several days Frederic was tormented by what Dubourg had said to him, and the image of the young mute was constantly before his eyes. His melancholy had almost disappeared, but now it weighed upon him more than ever, even when he was near Constance. The General had returned to Paris with his niece, and, although Frederic could see Constance every day, he scarcely dared visit her. Mademoiselle de Valmont, astonished at his sadness, dared not ask its cause; but her eyes spoke for her, revealing the share she felt in his hidden sorrow, and often the anxiety she experienced to divine its reason.

Wishing to be free of his anxiety and to have news of Sister Anne, Frederic begged Dubourg several times to go to Vizille, to see the young orphan and try to console her. But on this point Dubourg was not to be persuaded.

"I will not go," he said; "I've seen her once, and that's enough. I don't care to see her again, and have the blues for six weeks, — I, who never knew what they were before. My presence would not console her anyway; she would not believe what I said because I lied to her before. My

journey would do no good and would not change the situation in the least."

As he was not able to gain Dubourg's consent to be his emissary, Frederic decided to ask his father's permission to go away for a couple of weeks. He only decided upon this course after long hesitation, but remorse would not let him rest. He was constantly tormented by the memory of the poor little girl, and he was sure he should be more calm, more tranquil, after he had seen her.

For some time the Count had treated his son with the most tender friendship. He believed he had entirely forgotten the fancy that had led him astray during his stay in Dauphiny, and, being certain of his love for Mademoiselle de Valmont, the Count dropped his tone of severity toward Frederic. He hoped soon to see accomplished the plan he had formed, in which he felt sure of the General's sympathy, and he was therefore greatly surprised at his son's request for permission to be absent a fortnight.

The Count of Montreville's brow became once more dark and severe, and Frederic, as usual trembling before his father, waited anxiously to hear what he would say.

"Where do you want to go?" asked the Count, after a moment's silence.

Frederic stammered some pretext, but the Count did not give him time to speak.

"Don't beat around the bush; I hate it! You're still thinking of that woman who ensnared you on your journey, and for whom I know you committed a thousand follies. I must confess that I had supposed you had become reasonable. I believed that the memory of this intrigue had vanished from your fancy long ago — I don't say from your heart, for the heart has nothing to do with such affairs."

"O father, if you knew her!"

"No more, monsieur. You can, unquestionably, have no intention of marrying your conquest. But it is possible you have wrongs to repair. I do not know this girl; perhaps you have been more guilty than I thought. It may be that she was your victim; perhaps she is now friendless and an outcast through your fault. If money can restore her happiness, believe me, monsieur, I will not spare it. But I am the one to look after this matter, not you."

"You, father?"

"Yes, monsieur, I myself. I shall know better than any other how to arrange it. You will not leave Paris at present. Besides," the Count went on after a moment's reflection, "moreover, your presence is indispensable here. The General intends to marry his niece to a young colonel, whom he expects, and who will arrive before long."

"The General — to marry his niece?" said Frederic.

A revolution had taken place in Frederic. His sadness and melancholy had disappeared before a violent disturbance, a jealous anger, which was evident in his excited glance. He could no longer sit still, and when he questioned his father he seemed to be awaiting a sentence of life or death.

"Yes," said the Count, pretending not to notice Frederic's condition — "yes, the General intends to marry his niece. I don't think there's anything surprising in that."

"And — and — this colonel is coming? Do you know him, father? Is he young? Is he attractive? No doubt Mademoiselle de Valmont loves him?"

"Please remember that I am not in Mademoiselle de Valmont's confidence. She must have met the colonel in society. Yes, I believe he is a young man of twenty-eight or thirty years."

"Is he handsome?"

"Oh, handsome or homely, he is a man of honor; isn't that enough?"

"And this marriage is arranged?"

"It appears that it is."

"Mademoiselle Constance has never spoken of it to me!"

"But why should she have talked in advance of a thing which a well-bred young woman never mentions?"

"Oh, of course I have no right — I ought not to expect — but still I should have thought —"

"Besides, it is possible that the General has not yet told his niece of his plans."

"And is it on this account that I am to remain in Paris?"

"Certainly. In such circumstances there are a thousand details of fêtes, of toilet, of shopping; the General, a man accustomed to the life of the camps, understands nothing of such things. Like a boy, he has need of advice, and he depends on you for it."

"Well, it is very amiable of him — I am glad that he has found me good enough."

"So now, Frederic, I repeat, do not think of going away."

This warning was now useless. The Count went to see his old friend, with whom he wished to have a private talk; and Frederic, after his father's departure, sat as if stunned by what he had heard. Poor Sister Anne! your memory has vanished! Frederic, pale, agitated, breathing with difficulty, strode up and down his apartment, and then, having sat down for a few minutes, would rise abruptly, sighing and clinching his hands with convulsive force. It was in this state that Dubourg found him when he came to say farewell, Frederic having told him of his plan; and Dubourg, shocked at his friend's condition, paused to consider him.

"What is the matter, Frederic? What the devil has happened to you? I say, can't you speak,

instead of stamping around and knocking over the furniture?"

"Who would have believed it? Who would have thought it? Oh, women, women!"

"Ah! if it is a question of women, I shan't worry."

"To conceal such perfidy under those sweet eyes and that frank face! For it is perfidy! She ought to have told me she loved another! To welcome me so cordially, to seem so glad to see me! Oh, it is frightful!"

"There's no doubt it's frightful; but what are you talking about?"

"Of Mademoiselle de Valmont, of Constance — so beautiful, so charming!"

"Oh, yes; the one who is so much like Sister Anne?"

"Yes, dear friend; and what do you think? She is going to be married — to marry a man I never saw; but she loves him, — that goes without saying! A man that I don't know, but he's coming in a few days to marry her!"

"Mademoiselle de Valmont is, then, about to marry?"

"Yes, Dubourg."

"Well, what's that to you? You don't love her — you are not at all smitten with her — not a word of gallantry has ever crossed your lips to her — you are a brother to her, a friend. You told me so not a month ago."

"No, of course I don't love her! But there are certain marks of confidence that you owe a friend, especially when you see that friend every day."

"Ah, you see her every day!"

"She could have made me understand, she could have let me see! O Constance! I would not have believed it!"

"Ah! then you're not going to Dauphiny just now! Tell me — Frederic! Frederic!"

But he was already far away, running like a crazy person to the home of Mademoiselle de Valmont. Dubourg left the hotel, saying, "He's a fine fellow to accuse women of perfidy! Oh, these men! these men! I must get my dinner. I don't know how it is, but I'm already in debt to my restaurant, and it's not the middle of the month."

Frederic reached the General's house without having formed any plan, without knowing what he intended to say or what he intended to do. He entered the house, where the servants were accustomed to seeing him, and, rapidly crossing several apartments, reached the salon where he usually found Constance. She was there indeed, seated at her piano. When he saw her busy and calm, as was her wont, Frederic remained a moment motionless to gaze at her.

Constance had turned her head when she heard someone enter, and smiled when she recognized

Frederic, whose excitement she had not as yet noticed.

"It's you, monsieur," said she. "So much the better; you are a good musician and can help me pick out this piece."

The young man did not reply; he continued to gaze at Constance, who was so accustomed to his strange and often silent ways that she did not at first notice that he was disturbed. She turned again, however, when she saw that he had not approached her, and this time his emotion did not escape her.

"What is the matter with you, monsieur?" she asked with interest. "You seem much disturbed."

"Oh, nothing is the matter with me, mademoiselle; what could be?"

"But I don't know — you have never told me your troubles."

At this point a slight tone of reproach crept into the voice of Constance. Frederic, seating himself beside her, seemed to wish to read her eyes; while Constance, surprised, blushed, and lowered them; never had he looked at her so before.

"You fear that I divine what is going on in your heart," said Frederic at last, feigning a tone of irony to conceal his grief.

"I, monsieur! Really, I don't know what you mean; I don't understand you. Why should I fear to have my thoughts read? I am not guilty; if I am, it is not for you to reproach me."

"Oh, of course — you are entirely mistress of your feelings, mademoiselle; I know that I have no claim on your heart."

"Mon Dieu! What is the matter with you, Monsieur Frederic? Really, you alarm me; your trouble is unnatural."

"What is the matter with me? Ah, Constance, you love another, and you ask me that!"

Mademoiselle de Valmont remained silent, bewildered; never had Frederic addressed her in this way; and the words, "you love another," — did they not mean, "you should love only me"? Constance felt a delicious emotion in her heart, which beat more quickly; her eyes beamed with an expression of pleasure and happiness, and her voice was even more tender than usual as she spoke to Frederic.

"I love another! Mon Dieu! what do you mean? Explain yourself, Frederic. I don't understand."

The lovely girl had understood only one thing, and that was that the young man did not wish her to love anyone else, which was enough to make her believe that she was beloved. For a long time she had hoped that she had inspired in Frederic the most tender sentiments; but still he had never said a word on the subject, never anything which meant, I love you; and even when everything leads one to believe it, one likes to hear it said.

Frederic was silent again, while deep sighs escaped his breast. Still he said nothing.

"Will you speak, monsieur?" said Constance. "What troubles you today? What have I done to deserve your reproaches? Explain it to me. I wish it; understand, monsieur, I wish it."

The voice of Constance was so tender as she uttered these words that Frederic could not help looking at her again, and certainly Mademoiselle de Valmont's eyes harmonized with her voice, for he remained some moments gazing into them with delight; but suddenly he exclaimed,—

"How unhappy I am!"

"You unhappy, Frederic? And why?"

"You are going to be married—"

"I am going to be married! That is the first news I have heard of it."

"Oh, it would be vain to try to conceal it from me; I know all, mademoiselle. I know that your intended will arrive in a few days, that he is a colonel, and that you love him."

"What!—a colonel—and I love him! Oh, good gracious! this is too much. And what is the name of this colonel whom I am going to marry?"

"His name—oh, my faith! I forgot to ask it. But most assuredly you know what I am talking about. You won't insist that you don't know a colonel."

"There are several who come to see my uncle, but—"

"Ah, there are several; you confess it then!"

"And who told you, monsieur, that I am going to marry?"

"Someone who knows what he is talking about, — my father, who heard it from your uncle."

"From my uncle? But I don't understand this at all."

"You pretend not to understand me! But I know you are waiting with impatience the arrival of your future husband!"

Constance reflected for some time, and then replied with an air which she endeavored to render very cold, —

"Really, monsieur, I am somewhat astonished at what you have said to me; but if it were true that I did intend to marry, I don't see how it concerns you in the least. And I am sure it is a matter to which you would be supremely indifferent."

"Ah, do you think so? Well, you are right, mademoiselle; it can be nothing to me."

"Very well, monsieur; then why do you ask me all these questions?"

"Why? Ah, Constance! You are going to marry; — and this colonel, — do you love him?"

"And — if I loved anyone, would it cause you pain?"

Constance wanted to push him to the point, to make him declare his sentiments. Frederic could no longer control himself; his heart would not

keep its secret another moment. "Ah," he cried, "I love you, I adore you! I shall die if you marry another!"

"He loves me; I am happy to have torn this confession from him! I believed he would never say it!"

The lovely girl extended her hand to Frederic, who fell at her knees and covered it with kisses; while Constance said to him tenderly,—

"Ah, Frederic, I, too, love you. I have never loved anyone but you. Dear friend, why did you not say this to me sooner? It makes me very happy, and I have waited for it so long! My uncle is good to me; he would not make me unhappy. I have not heard of any plan for a marriage. But if he has formed such a plan, he will have to give it up. I shall tell him that I will marry no one but you. You alone can have my hand and my heart, and he will consent to it, I am certain. He loves you too, Frederic,—who can help loving you? You will see that you are wrong to be sorrowful and melancholy, to conceal your troubles from me. Dear friend, I read your heart a long time ago,—don't you think you ought to read mine?"

Frederic answered only by oaths of love; he lost his head entirely; Constance's confession made him almost hysterical with delight, and Mademoiselle de Valmont had much difficulty in calming him. He would not leave her until she had

The lovely girl extended her hand to Frederic. He fell at her knees and covered it with kisses.

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assured him once more that she would never marry another.

Frederic left the house in a state of mind very different from that in which he had entered it. The certainty of being loved by Constance had changed all his resolutions in a moment, and in his delirium Sister Anne was entirely forgotten; he even forgot his remorse. Like those sick people who in the height of fever suffer no more pain, Frederic cried,—

"Dubourg was right! I love Constance! I adore her! I will never love anyone but her!"

Two days after this declaration the Count of Montreville left for Dauphiny, accompanied by a postilion and a single servant, perfectly sure that Frederic would not want to leave Constance.

CHAPTER VII

Death of Marguerite. Sister Anne Leaves Her Cottage

Let us return to the wood and to the young mute, whom we left awaiting Frederic's return, and whom we shall again find still waiting for him.

But the trees were now barren of foliage, the fields no longer offered to the eye the soft greens of luxuriant vegetation; the grass had disappeared from the valley, there was no longer verdure on the banks of the gently rippling brooks. The leaves had fallen and the feet of the villager now passed over that which a short time before had given grateful shade to his head and embellished his garden. He trampled under his foot the beautiful foliage of the springtime, which the approach of another season had relentlessly sent to its death.

Thus all things pass and are succeeded by yet others which, in their turn, must also pass. Another foliage will be born, to fall in due time, and the man who tramples it with his feet must also return to dust over which other generations witting nothing of those gone before, will tread.

He thinks he is of more importance, because his course has been a little longer; but when the centuries have dispersed his ashes, what will there be left of him more than of the leaves which the wind chases before him?

The autumn inclines us to melancholy; its soft haze leads to dreaming and reflection. The man of the city does not feel this, because he is swept along in the current of worldly interests, by absorption in his business or his pleasures. But the man of the fields can contemplate each day the changes that are at work in the whole of nature, and his heart stirs at sight of the forest, whose black and impoverished trees seem to wear mourning for the lost springtime. If he traverses a route shaded by the thick branches, if he seeks the groves under which he found repose during the heat of the day, he sees nothing but dry branches, which have been broken by the hand of the poor, seeking scanty fuel.

The dome of the forest is lighted. It is less sombre than in summer, and the sunbeams penetrate everywhere. But this brightness, far from being an advantage, deprives it of all charm. One regrets the dark and mysterious pathways, in the midst of which it is so sweet to walk in the season of love.

As he sees the approach of frost, and observes the signs of winter, man, rocked in the cradle of hope, says to himself: Springtime will return; I

shall see again my shadows, my grass and my groves. The springtime returns; but often the man no longer watches the changing seasons.

Sister Anne only noticed the chill of autumn, because it made her realize the length of time that had elapsed since Frederic left her. The poor little thing could no longer count the days, their number was too great, but hope had not yet fled from her heart. She could not believe that her lover meant to abandon her. Sometimes she imagined that Frederic was dead, and then the blackest despair took possession of her soul. When this thought presented itself to her mind, life seemed nothing but a long suffering. Could she continue to live if the hope of seeing her lover again no longer sustained her? She often wished to die; but she was to become a mother, and the joy of this hope attached her to existence. Something told her to live for the sake of her child.

It was long since the young orphan had been to the village. An old shepherd who passed through the wood was accustomed to leave each day, at the foot of a tree, the black bread which the cottagers needed, and in exchange he found always a great pot of milk; this bread, with cheese and eggs, comprising the entire nourishment of the poor women in winter. When Sister Anne had finished the preparations for their repast, and given her aged companion all she needed, she went with her goats to the mountain road and

seated herself at the foot of her mother's tree. In spite of the cold, which began to be quite severe, the young girl did not miss a day at her self-appointed tryst. Covered with an old half-worn woollen mantle, she braved the rigor of the season, wrapping herself in this garment, although it was a very slight protection. Her goats found nothing on which to browse on the mountain; they crouched shivering at the feet of Sister Anne, whose features were emaciated by her condition and her sufferings, and offered but too faithful a picture of poverty and sorrow.

More than once the snow fell in great flakes, and formed a mantle of ice over the body of the girl, so that she was scarcely to be distinguished from the ground on which she sat, who shared her covering with her poor companions. The traveller who passed over the mountain and noticed this snow-covered mound observed the head of the young girl as its only sign of life. She looked always toward the road leading from the village. She was insensible to the cold; she did not know that her body shivered from the chill, her teeth chattered and her limbs stiffened. She did not feel physical suffering. A great anguish absorbed her. It filled her being so completely that there was no room for any other sensation.

When it grew so dark that she could no longer see the road, she rose and looked around, astonished to see herself covered with snow; she shook

her mantle, caressed her goats, and went slowly down the mountain. She returned to make old Marguerite comfortable, then she threw herself on her solitary couch. She no longer found love there; she found not even repose, which it was impossible to attain while her heart was filled with an unsatisfied yearning for her lover. She saw him everywhere; his memory spoke to her from every object. If only she could have voiced her complaints, could have called, could have implored him; — it seemed to her that her accents would have reached him anywhere! Poor child, whom Heaven had deprived of the privilege of expression! Tears, always tears! They alone were left you.

Sister Anne saw old Marguerite grow feebler day by day. For a long time the old woman had not gone out of the house; she had scarcely been able to move to her great chair. Marguerite was seventy-six years old; her life had been active and laborious; her old age was tranquil; free from infirmities, the good woman did not suffer. Age alone weakened her forces, which diminished with every hour; she was going out like a lamp, after she had given a clear light. She had not been brilliant, but she had been useful, and that is preferable.

The instant determined by nature approached; Marguerite could not see another spring. Sister Anne redoubled her cares for her adoptive mother;

perceiving how much her faculties were enfeebled, she gave up her visits to the mountain, in order not to leave her. This sacrifice was the greatest she could have made. The good old Marguerite, touched by her attachment, smiled on her adopted daughter and called her "dear child." One morning Sister Anne approached her mother's bed as usual to see how she had passed the night, but Marguerite made no response to her question; she did not stretch out her trembling hand for greeting; her eyes were closed; she would never open them again. Sister Anne, frightened, took the old woman's hand, — it was cold and inanimate. In vain she tried to warm it in her own. She dropped a kiss on Marguerite's brow, but no smile was her recompense.

The young girl remained overwhelmed beside the bed of her companion; she gazed at the venerable features of the good soul who had cared for her infancy, her only friend; and she too had been taken away! Marguerite seemed to sleep. The serenity of her features testified to that of her spirit in its last earthly moments. Sister Anne leaned over the bed, supported on one hand, and could not keep her eyes from the face of her adoptive mother. Her sorrow was calm, but it was not less deep. The tears had dried in her eyes, but their expression was heart-breaking.

Sister Anne had passed a part of the day beside the inanimate remains of the good woman, and

she could scarcely persuade herself to withdraw; but she knew that she must perform the last duties for Marguerite, and conduct her to her final asylum, and the young girl was incapable of doing this alone and without help. She must go to the village, where she had not been for a long time.

She left the cottage, emerged from the wood, and turned toward Vizille. On her way she saluted the villagers whom she knew, as usual; but she could not understand why the peasants turned their heads away, or looked at her with scorn. Instead of stopping, as was their custom, to pass the time of day with Sister Anne, they hastened past her and seemed anxious to avoid meeting her; the young people looked at her and smiled mockingly; some gossiped together, pointing their fingers at her, and on their faces she saw none of those marks of interest that they were accustomed to show her.

"What is the matter with them?" said the poor orphan. "Is it because I am more unhappy, because I have lost my mother, and Frederic has abandoned me?"

She did not realize that the proof of her weakness was evident in her appearance; and this pledge of love, of which she was so proud, was only a mark of shame to the peasants. In the village, people are more severe than in the city; they make a great point of innocence, because it is the only treasure they possess. The residents

of Vizille held very severe opinions on the subject of morals. A young girl who had fallen became an object of general scorn; and she, as well as her betrayer, was forbidden to take communion. Perhaps they should have shown themselves more indulgent to the young mute; for she lived in the depth of the wood, and did not know that she was sinning when she yielded to the prompting of her heart. But peasants do not reason: they act from habit, and often mechanically. They had shown great interest in Sister Anne while she was innocent as well as unhappy; now that she bore the evidence of her weakness they repulsed her, without stopping to ask whether she was not now more unfortunate than before.

The young girl arrived in the village, and, understanding nothing at all of the conduct of the inhabitants, she could not imagine why the young girls fled at her approach, without deigning to respond to her signs, or why their parents looked at her with such a severe and scornful air.

She knocked at the door of a cottage of which the owners were friends of Marguerite; but the woman who opened the door started with surprise when she saw the young girl, and wished to send her away from the house. Sister Anne tried to make her understand the loss she had sustained; but the angry woman pushed her into the street, where a group of villagers had gathered to stare at her.

"How dare you come to the village in this state?" said an old peasant to her. "How dare you show yourself among us, and try to enter our houses? You carry the marks of your shame! You had better hide yourself in the depth of your wood. And you dare to present yourself to our daughters! Do you want them to admire your fine conduct? Do you think you are setting them a beautiful example? Go, daughter of Clotilda! You ought to die of shame! Return to your cottage! Fly with your betrayer if you wish, but don't show yourself again among our wives and children."

Sister Anne could not understand how it could be sinful to learn what love is. She looked at the villagers in surprise; she stretched to them her supplicating hands, trying to make them comprehend that she had not come to ask aid for herself, but the villagers would not see; they repulsed her and shut their doors in her face. Some of them went to the end of the village with her, and only left her after they had warned her never to enter its limits again.

The poor child was suffocated, her sobs stifled her. To be treated thus because she had loved Frederic! This thought sustained her courage: she suffered these humiliations for him. She would endure everything rather than give up his love. She regained her cottage, all in tears. It was night; profound solitude reigned in this

dwelling, which must be now more than ever the abode of silence. The poor child was entirely alone upon earth. Sister Anne was untouched by the vain terrors and almost puerile fears which even great souls sometimes feel in the presence of death. She returned to the bed on which Marguerite reposed, and, throwing herself on her knees before this funeral couch, stretched her arms toward her protectress, as if to say, —

"O mother! you would not have repulsed me. If I had come to you, even more guilty still, you would have had pity on me. Your great age, your feeble sight, prevented you from seeing my condition, but you would have pardoned me. And they have driven me away!"

Is it only by cruelty that we can show the unfortunate the way to repentance?

Sister Anne passed the entire night beside the bed of Marguerite. She prayed from the bottom of her heart to her who had stood in the place of her mother; she besought the departed to protect her still, and during this sorrowful night the thought of Frederic did not come once to trouble her spiritual task.

The next day at dawn Sister Anne went to the wood to wait for the passing of the old shepherd who exchanged bread for milk. The villager was not long in coming. He was a man of sixty years, but still strong and robust. He had passed a part of his life in the forests, and, like Sister Anne, he

was almost a stranger to all that went on in the village, which is the world for an inhabitant of the wood.

The girl took him by the hand, and seemed to beseech him to follow her to the cottage. The old shepherd allowed himself to be led, and she took him to Marguerite. The old mountaineer looked on, apparently unmoved; the habit of a solitary life sometimes renders one indifferent to the sorrows of others. Anne nevertheless made him such pitiful signs that it was impossible not to comprehend her meaning, and he consented to perform for her the service she asked of him.

The mute led him to the fig-tree in the garden, under which Marguerite had loved to sit; she pointed with her finger to the earth; it was there she wished her adoptive mother to repose. The old shepherd soon dug the grave, after which he carried out the body of the good woman and covered it with earth. Sister Anne erected a cross over the spot, the only monument she could raise to her benefactress, but she came often to moisten it with her tears. How many magnificent mausoleums there are over which no one has ever shed a tear!

The old shepherd was gone; Sister Anne was again alone, and forever! She felt then with renewed vividness the loss she had sustained. Marguerite had talked little; for some time she had slept almost constantly; but she was there, and the

poor little thing had not felt herself abandoned by all the world. Only one person could console her, but he did not come, and each day destroyed the little hope that still sustained her. Sister Anne would not have had the strength to support her anguish if she had not felt that soon Heaven would give her one who would soften her grief. She would be a mother, and in that other existence she could forget her own. She had already suffered for him. She had been flouted and scorned. She would never again find in the village either comfort or protection; but the mere sight of her child will make her forget all her torments. Is it not just that often in the very cause of our sorrows we find our consolation?

As the days rolled on they changed to a sweet and grateful memory the vivid sorrow which Sister Anne had felt for the loss of Marguerite. But time, which softens the regrets of friendship, cannot lessen the anguish of one who loves. The image of Frederic was more than ever present in the thoughts of the young mute; she had nothing to distract her from it. She saw no one, and would not her dream of motherhood make her desire more than ever the presence of the father of her child?

During the time that Frederic had passed with Sister Anne, he had spoken to her sometimes of the world, of his father, and often of Paris, the city of his birth. In the course of the day, when

they were seated together on the border of the brook, it pleased him to picture the great city to the young girl. He described to her some of his pleasures, the theatres, and those brilliant promenades which made Paris such a delightful place of residence. The poor child could not comprehend all he told her, but she listened eagerly, testifying to her interest by opening wide her great eyes, by naïve movements, and by unexpected signs of surprise, which amused Frederic greatly. She often urged him to tell these stories, for one cannot make love continually. Some people say this is a great pity; they forget that one does not prize what one may have at any time.

All that Frederic had said was graven in the memory of Sister Anne. Each day she thought more of it, and said to herself, —

" He is no doubt in that great city of which he told me so often, in Paris, where he was born. Perhaps his father prevents him from coming to find me, but if I could go and join him, — if I could throw myself into his arms! Oh, I am sure he would be glad to see me! Then he would keep me near him, and I would never leave him, and I should be so happy! But how can I find this Paris?"

Each day the desire to go and find her lover grew stronger in this loving soul. She could not persuade herself that Frederic had forgotten her; she was convinced that he did not come because

he was forcibly kept from her. Since Marguerite was dead, there was no longer any reason why Sister Anne should remain in the wood. In her condition, and with her infirmity, no doubt her cottage was preferable to the danger, the pain, the fatigue, which she must encounter in a journey such as she wished to undertake; but a woman who loves deeply sees neither danger nor pain; she braves all, sustained by the hope of seeing once more the object of her affection. Sister Anne knew nothing of the world, she could not speak, and she carried in her bosom the fruit of her love; yet she decided to leave her asylum, to go in search of her lover. She will brave every peril, endure misery and privation of every kind; and, should she spend years in her quest, she will not be disheartened, for it will seem to her that each day she is nearer to her lover.

Her resolution made, she thought only of executing it; but she could not bear to abandon her cottage and the grave of Marguerite. Once more appealing to the old shepherd, she led him one morning to her dwelling, and showed him the little packet containing her clothes. She put it on her back, to indicate that she was about to travel. Then she made him sit down in the cottage, as if to say, "Stay here, it is all yours; I only beg you to take care of the fig-tree which shades my mother's grave, and of these poor animals, which have so long been my only companions."

The old shepherd understood her easily, but, although the cottage was a palace in his eyes, he could not take advantage of Sister Anne. The gift she had bestowed made him richer than he ever expected to be, but he tried, nevertheless, to dissuade her from a project which seemed to him senseless.

"Where do you wish to go, my child?" he said to her. "In two months you will be a mother, and yet you leave your house and go travelling! You poor little mute! Who will take you in, who will care for you? How will you ask your way? Be careful, little one, this is a very foolish thing to do, — at least wait awhile."

Sister Anne had made her decision; nothing could turn her from it. She shook her head as she looked at the old herdsman, and lifted her eyes to heaven, as if to say, God will lead me and take pity on me.

The old shepherd still tried to keep her.

"And you need money," he said. "Little girl, in the world you can't get on without money. I haven't lived in the village much, but I know that. Hang it! I haven't any to give you for your cottage and all that's in it. That's worth money."

Sister Anne smiled, and then drawing from her bosom a small bag of gray cloth, she took from it four pieces of gold, which she showed the shepherd. It was Marguerite's treasure. Some

time before her death the good old woman had told the young mute to look under her bed in a corner of the cottage, where she found the little sack well rolled and fastened, and Marguerite said to her, —

"Take it, my daughter; it is for you. This is the fruit of my savings and of sixty years of toil. I intended it for you. This money will enable you to buy a larger flock of goats."

At sight of the four pieces of gold the old shepherd had not a word to say, for he believed that with such an amount one could make the tour of the world.

"Go then, my child," he said to her. "I will keep your cottage, and you know it will always be yours when you return."

Sister Anne smiled sorrowfully, and then casting a last glance around her dwelling, took her little package in one hand, and in the other a stick on which she supported her steps in walking. She crossed the garden and said a last farewell to the grave of Marguerite. Her goats ran toward her, expectant that as usual she would lead them to the mountain. Sister Anne wept as she caressed them, for they had been her only friends, and something said to her, "You will never see them again."

As she crossed the wood, what memories filled her heart! There is the spot where they sat so often. There is the brook where she saw him for

the first time, — where he told her he loved her. These places seemed still animated by his presence, and it was not without an effort that she decided to leave them. But to restore her courage, she said, "I will find him, and perhaps we will return together."

She climbed the mountain and prostrated herself before the tree where Clotilda had perished. There she prayed her mother that from her place in heaven she would watch over her and guide her on her journey. At last she descended the side of the mountain toward the city, and walked in the direction in which Frederic had gone. She wished to follow in his footsteps.

CHAPTER VIII

The Travels of Sister Anne. The Forest

Since daybreak the young dumb girl had been on her way. The weather was cold but fine; a sharp frost had hardened the roads, silenced the brooks and arrested the floods. The fields were almost deserted, and the country people only crossed them reluctantly and in haste, as they hurried to return to their comfortable cottages to seek their warm chimney corners that they might enjoy the crackling blaze of the dry branches they had so laboriously gathered under the leafless boughs of the gloomy forest.

The sight of a bright fire is very cheerful in the long winter evenings to those who sit with their loved ones in the peaceful harbor of home, employed with their evening occupations and their song and laughter — endeavor to imagine what the lack of it means; the poor wayfarer, the mendicant who passes through the village, stops and looks with an envious eye, as at a forbidden paradise, when he sees it shining through a cottage window, deeming himself fortunate indeed, poor wretch, if he may warm himself in the open fields before a few bundles of straw to

which his companions in misfortune have set fire.

Sister Anne had only been walking four hours, and already she was interested in the novelty of the objects to be seen on every side.

Never having seen anything before but her cottage, her wood, and the village of Vizille, she paused in astonishment before a forge, before a mill, and before a country house which seemed to her a veritable castle. Everything was new to her, but how should she find her way in this world which seemed to her so great; how could she ever reach the city, the name of which she did not know, of the route to which she was ignorant? Sometimes these thoughts weakened her courage, when she would pause and look sorrowfully about her, and then, thinking of Frederic, would go on her way once more.

Toward the middle of the day she reached a hamlet. She knocked at the door of a peasant's house, and when it was opened to her she saw a young woman nursing a baby, while her four other children played about her. A good old woman watched the fire, and fed it with dry branches that she had gathered in the wood.

"What do you want, my friend?" asked the young mother.

Sister Anne gazed at the picture which was offered to her view, and could not turn her eyes from the baby clinging to its mother's breast. An

expression of joy animated her countenance, and she said to herself at this moment, "I also will nurse my baby, I shall receive its caresses, and I shall carry it at my breast."

"Tell us what you want," said the old woman without turning from the fire.

"O mother!" said the young woman, "see how pale she is, how she seems to be suffering! She is so young, and soon to be a mother; and she is walking about in this cold weather! You are going to join your husband no doubt."

Sister Anne sighed; then, seeing that they awaited her reply, she signed to them that she could not speak.

"Ah, mon Dieu! Mother dear, she is a mute —poor young thing!"

"A mute!" cried the old woman. "What, my dear! can't you speak? Oh, but I am very sorry for you, poor child. You are dumb, and are you deaf also?"

Sister Anne signed to them that she could hear perfectly.

"Ah, that is very fortunate, truly," replied the old woman, approaching the young traveller, while the children looked at Sister Anne with curiosity, believing a mute to be unlike other people.

"Is it from an accident that you are dumb, my girl? Have you been so a long time? Was it from sickness? Can it be cured?"

"Mother," said the young woman, "let us first

attend to the needs of this poor creature; let us give her rest and refreshment. We will question her afterward."

They hastened to seat Anne before the fire. One child took her stick, another her bundle; the old woman got her something to eat, for the young mother could not leave the baby she was nursing. Sister Anne, deeply touched by their kindness to her, showed her gratitude by such eloquent gestures that the people of the cottage were full of sympathy.

"They are not all like the folks in my village," thought the young traveller. "Here they don't turn me out, they don't repulse me, they are good to me, they treat me like their own child. The world is not all so bad."

This kindness revived her courage, but she could not answer all the grandmother's questions. The women believed from her sign language that she was going to join her husband.

"He is probably in the city," said the old woman to her.

Sister Anne made an affirmative sign, and as the nearest city was Grenoble the peasants supposed that she was going there.

After having rested for several hours under this hospitable roof, Sister Anne was anxious to begin her journey again; but before she started she took from the little bag one of her pieces of gold, which she offered to the young woman.

"Keep it, keep it, my dear," said she; "we want nothing for what we have done. You are so much to be pitied in your affliction that you ought to be cared for freely wherever you go, but unfortunately everybody will not be of this opinion; some hearts are hard and unfeeling. You are going to the city; there you will need your money, for the city people will not refuse it."

Sister Anne showed her gratitude warmly to the young mother. She embraced her tenderly and her nursling also, and then left the cottage, after they had pointed out to her the road to Grenoble.

The young traveller could not go very fast. Unaccustomed to walking, her delicate condition hindered her, the little bundle wearied her, and she was often obliged to rest, sitting down upon a fallen tree, or a stone, or at the side of the road, and waiting there until her strength had returned sufficiently to begin her journey again.

Occasionally while she rested travellers passed her on the road. Those who were in carriages did not look at her; sometimes a man on horseback threw her a glance, but the foot passengers always stopped and spoke to her. Receiving no response they went on, some calling her stupid, others believing her to be impertinent because she did not deign to speak to them. Sister Anne looked at the passers-by with an air of surprise.

She smiled at the peasant who invited her to mount behind him on his horse, and she dropped her eyes when people were angry because she did not answer. The most curious were like the others; they ended by passing her by.

Toward the end of the day Sister Anne found herself near Grenoble, having followed exactly the route her friends had shown her. The sight of a large city caused her a new surprise, which increased at each step she took in its streets. She saw people there much more elegantly dressed than any in her native village. Astonished, embarrassed, she walked about, trembling at each step. The great houses, the shops, the continual movement of people coming and going, the constant noise, the curious way in which she was looked at, — everything distressed her. Poor girl! What would you do if you were in Paris?

It was night and she must seek shelter. Sister Anne dared not enter anywhere; the houses were all so stately that she feared she would not be received in such places. For a long time she wandered at random, not knowing where she went; but, almost overcome with fatigue, she finally decided to ask admission somewhere. The poor little thing did not know what an inn was, and thought she would be received in any house and would be given a bed if she were able to pay for it.

She knocked at the door of a modest-looking

house. It was opened to her, and she entered trembling.

"What do you want?" cried an old tailor, who acted as porter.

The young girl looked at him sorrowfully and made signs to indicate that she could not speak; but the porter did not notice these signs, and chose to repeat his question. Not receiving an answer, he rose in anger, ran to Sister Anne, took her by the arm and put her outside the door, saying, —

"Oh, you won't tell where you are going. Well, you won't come in here, young woman."

This reception was not encouraging; the poor orphan was again in the street, and although there were tears in her eyes, she recalled her courage, and decided to try another door. Here she was treated as a beggar, and again sent away. It seemed as if she could not endure any more; her sobs choked her. She seated herself, weeping, upon a stone bench before a door, but presently this door opened; an old couple came out, well wrapped up in coats and furs, and followed by a servant who carried a torch. As they passed they ordered Sister Anne to leave the bench, which belonged to their house, treating her as a beggar, a criminal, a ne'er-do-well, and threatening that if she did not go away they would put her in prison. Sister Anne rose trembling, and tried to carry her fatigue and sorrow still farther. The old people

went on, delighted with their achievement, promising themselves new glory from the story they would tell of the audacity of the lower classes, in the circle with which they expected to pass the evening.

The young girl, overcome by fatigue, could scarcely hold herself erect, and knew not where to direct her steps. The treatment she had received gave her a very melancholy impression of life in the city; but she must find a shelter for the night. She approached a brilliantly lighted house, of which the principal entrance was open, while several people were going in and out. She took one of her pieces of gold in her hand and ventured in, showing it as she entered. This time she had made a good choice, for she had found an inn, and the sight of the piece of gold insured her a favorable reception.

When the landlady perceived that the young traveller could not answer her, she thought she must talk for two; and, while she led her to the little chamber in which she was to sleep, she boasted of the advantages of her house, of the fine manner in which her inn was kept, asked her where she came from, and where she was going, and then interrupted herself suddenly, to exclaim, "But, good Lord! what a fool I am! I am asking you questions that you can't answer."

But she began again a moment later, and then said, "How cruel it is! I don't comprehend your

signs. I don't understand you at all; but that's all right, my child; you shall be served in a moment. Oh, if my nephew were only here! He knows mathematics and everything; he would understand you without any trouble; but he is away, poor boy,—he is employed now in the telegraph office at Lyons."

At last the landlady left Sister Anne, and after she had eaten a light supper she sought the rest of which she was so much in need. Sleep, poor girl, and may your dreams be so happy that for a moment you will forget your sufferings!

Sister Anne had heard her landlady affirm several times, "You are in the best hotel at Grenoble." She knew that this must be the name of the town to which she had come, and she remembered that Frederic had also mentioned this name in her presence. This recollection decided her not to leave the town until she had looked for him there. The next morning, after she had made her landlady understand that she would pass this day in Grenoble, she left the inn, and started to inspect the city, which seemed to her immense.

As Sister Anne walked on, she looked at each house, each window; if Frederic were there, she thought, he would see her. He would call her or run after her. Sometimes she paused, believing she had recognized his figure; but she knew instantly she was mistaken. She spent the entire day in this fashion, and only returned to the inn

when it was so dark that she could no longer distinguish the objects about her.

"You have gone over the whole city," said the landlady to her. "It is very pretty, my faith. Grenoble is a very pretty town; but it is not so big as Lyons, and Lyons doesn't compare with Paris."

At the name of Paris the young traveller started with joy, and pressed quickly the landlady's arm, to indicate to her that this was her destination, but the landlady was not very quick of comprehension.

"I expect you are going to Lyons," she said to her. "It is not very far; not more than fifteen good leagues. I am sure you can't go very fast in your condition, but you ought to get there in three or four days at most."

Sister Anne mounted sorrowfully to her chamber. How could she ever find the way to Paris if she could not make anyone understand that she wanted to go there? This thought filled her with despair, but she besought her mother to guide her in her travels. She prayed again, and hope rose anew in her soul. Without hope what would become of the unfortunate?

The next day the young girl prepared to leave the inn, and the landlady presented her a bill, which the poor little thing did not understand at all; but she gave her one of her gold pieces, and very little of it was returned to her. City people

make you pay for every bow and every courtesy. They had been so very polite to Sister Anne that her sojourn at the inn cost her a little dear.

They had shown her the way to Lyons, and she started once more on her journey, her little bundle and her stick in her hand. But between Grenoble and Lyons there are mountainous paths and thick woods,—is it not easy to be lost in them? She prayed to God to be her guide. She walked a part of the day, and in the evening, overcome with fatigue, though she had made very little progress, she entered a farmhouse, where they consented to let her sleep in the barn; but she could have passed the night anywhere with only a shelter from the cold. She could sleep upon straw as if it were a bed of down; the walk had at least insured her some hours of sound slumber.

Her stay at the farm had not exhausted her purse, but the young traveller began to see that she must be careful of her money, which was almost the only talisman that could secure her a shelter. Hospitality is very rare. The most humane people think they do enough for the poor wayfarer if they give him a penny and a morsel of bread; they do not invite him to come under their roof. We are a long way from the time when it was considered an honor to give refreshment to a stranger without asking about his rank or his fortune, when each one shared with the passer-by

his fire, his meal and his bed. Other times, other manners! We have become proud and selfish, and we wish to share nothing. In return, we have good friends who come to eat our soup and drink our wine, even sometimes to make love to our wives, and when they leave our house they say all sorts of unpleasant things about us; but of course this is because they love us, and they are jealous of our other friends.

About the middle of the second day after she had left Grenoble, Sister Anne was lost in thought and in sad memories, and she did not notice that she had wandered from the straight road that had been pointed out to her; not observing it until weariness made her feel the need of repose, and she looked about her in search of the village which should be near by, according to the directions which had been given her in the morning.

The place where she found herself was gloomy and deserted, and there was no house in sight. She mounted a little hill, and could see nothing but an immense forest of firs. To the left, a torrent filled with broken ice plunged into a deep and tortuous ravine; to the right there was a bare mountain, all rocks, with no trace of human habitation.

The young girl began to be afraid that she had lost her way. She remained undecided for several minutes as to what she would do; both to right and left the roads seemed very bad. She did not

wish to go back, so she decided to follow the road leading into the forest. After she had walked for about half an hour she found herself before those superb firs which grow straight toward heaven, and of which the branches, although they had lost their adornment, seemed still to lift themselves proudly into the air and brave the winds and frosts.

A good broad road led into the forest; Sister Anne did not hesitate to take it. Hoping that this road, on which there were traces of carriages and horses, would lead her to the village she was in search of, or to a neighboring town, she overcame her fatigue and hurried on, anxious to arrive before night. As she advanced on this route, where she could see no one, and which was bordered on each side by thick woods, its sombre aspect chilled the spirit of the traveller. The poor mute went on, her eyes seeking the end of this long road, but seeing only dark firs, and nothing that could indicate the neighborhood of a village, and her heart contracted. Night began to cover the earth with its shadows. Her eye could no longer perceive the paths which crossed from right to left, and at length Sister Anne, whose courage was greater than her strength, found it impossible to go any farther.

It was evident that she must pass the night in the forest; she was not at all afraid; she had never heard of robbers, of which there were none

in her wood, but she shrank from the cold, and in her delicate situation it seemed dreadful to pass the night in the forest, to await the dawn without a shelter, but it had to be done nevertheless. She seated herself close to a great tree; on leaving a village or town, she was careful to provide herself with food for the way, and now she ate some bread and dry nuts; then, wrapping herself as well as she could in her clothes, she put her little bundle under her head and prepared for the sleep which could not fail to come to her after the fatigues of the day.

It was midnight when the young girl opened her eyes, and the moon, which shed its light over the road on the side of which she had fallen asleep, illuminated the strange picture which was spread before her waking eyes.

Four men surrounded Sister Anne; they were dressed like miserable wood-cutters, in blouses, and wide trousers supported by broad belts, and wore large hats, some with the brim drooping, the others with it pushed up in front, revealing faces which expressed neither sweetness nor humanity. The hair of all floated in disorder, and their long beards added to the sinister look of their features. Each held in his hand a gun upon which he leaned, while in the belt of each was a hunting-knife and a pair of pistols.

Two of these men leaned over Sister Anne, another was on his knees and held a dark lantern

with which he lighted the face of the young girl. A fourth looked at her but also seemed to be watching the road to be sure that all was quiet in that direction.

The sight of these four figures absorbed in studying her caused Sister Anne an involuntary shudder, and, although ignorant of the extent of the peril which threatened her, she felt a terror which she could not quite understand, and closed her eyes again to avoid their stares.

"What the devil have we found here?" said one of the thieves leaning over Sister Anne. "I am afraid it is nothing very much; I don't know whether it is worth while to stop for it."

"But why not?" said the one who held the lantern; "anything is better than nothing. But wait! Look, Pierre; she's got a bundle under her head."

"Nothing but miserable rags. Don't you see she's a woman who works in the fields?"

"Well, is she dead or is she asleep?" asked a third. "See here, Red Top, give her a push. Must we pass the night looking at this poor wretch?"

"By the Lord, it seems to me there's nothing better to do. The road is perfectly quiet; isn't that true, Jacques?"

Jacques was the one who at a little distance seemed to be keeping guard. As he heard his comrade's words he approached the group sur-

rounding the young girl, exclaiming, "Curse it! the night is unlucky."

"Not so bad," cried Red Top, who was looking steadily at the young girl. "Morbleu! She's mighty pretty, this woman."

It was at this moment that Sister Anne opened her eyes, having decided to appeal to the compassion of the men who surrounded her, and, not having understood their language, she did not suspect their profession.

"Wait, look," cried Red Top; "there! she's going to wake up. She has beautiful eyes, I wager. I am curious to know what she will say."

Sister Anne gazed beseechingly at the men about her, stretching her hands toward them, and seeming to implore their pity.

"Oh, don't be afraid," said Pierre; "we won't do you any harm. But where did you come from? Where are you going? What put it into your head to sleep in our forest?"

The young girl, supposing the thieves to be wood-choppers, tried to make them understand that she had lost her way.

"Halloo, here's a woman who can't talk," cried Jacques. "What do you say to that? Have you lost your tongue from fright? Come on now, talk, morbleu!"

Sister Anne rose, and made signs again to show that she could not speak.

"What the devil sort of woman is that?" cried

Pierre, while Red Top, throwing the light from his lantern on the young girl, presently burst into a great laugh.

"Ho, ho! comrades, mute or not, she's a maid no longer, she has a man somewhere!"

This pleasantry was welcomed by a ferocious laugh from the other thieves, and the four bent their gaze on the young mute, who, not understanding the cause of their gayety, but unable to endure their looks, dropped her eyes timidly to the earth and stood trembling in the midst of them.

"Come on; let's leave this woman," resumed Pierre. "She's a poor deaf mute,—we don't want to bother with her!"

"A deaf mute!" exclaimed Red Top, in whose eyes glittered a frightful expression. "Why, such a woman as that is a real treasure; and besides, this one is pretty, she pleases me,—I'll make her my companion by and by."

"Go on, Red Top, are you joking?"

"Why, no, thunder! a deaf mute! think how valuable she'd be to us in our profession."

Sister Anne, trembling, had not heard the conversation of the thieves, but, noticing their indecision, and fearing that they would not give her shelter, of which she felt the need now more than ever, for the cold had stiffened all her limbs, drew her little treasure from her bosom. Having learned that the sight of money usually smoothed away

all difficulties, she took a piece of gold from her little bag and offered it with a supplicating air to one of the thieves.

"Oh, she has money and she offers it to us. That's good, parbleu! give it here, give it here, girl!" As he said these words Pierre seized the purse from Sister Anne, who stood aghast at seeing her treasure torn from her, while the thieves counted eagerly the contents of the little bag.

"Three pieces of gold, my faith!" cried Jacques, and the faces of the brigands shone with ferocious joy. "That's more than we've got in five days."

"I told you the find wasn't so bad!" cried Red Top. "Come on, comrades, let's take this woman to our den, and then enjoy ourselves."

As he spoke the robber took Sister Anne by the arm and led her toward the middle of the forest, Jacques taking care of her bundle, Pierre following him, Franck, the fourth brigand, having seized the lantern from the hands of Red Top and gone on in advance, to light the pathway for his companions.

The young girl walked unresisting in the midst of the thieves, not suspecting the horror of her situation, but thinking they were taking her to their home, to be with their wives and children. Nevertheless, the ferocious features of the four men, their brusque and rough manners, the arms which they carried, and their wild and singular talk filled the poor little thing with a terror which

almost deprived her of consciousness. Often to reassure herself she glanced timidly at her conductors, hoping to find in their faces an expression of pity and of compassion; but whenever she raised her eyes she met those of Red Top fastened upon her and gleaming with coarse passion. The features of this man increased the terror which his manners inspired in the young girl. His hair clustered in crisp, short curls of the color which had led his companions to name him Red Top. His eyes, of a pale gray, rolled in their orbits with astonishing quickness. There was always a ferocious smile on his lips, under a thick mustache of the same color as his hair. A great scar crossed his nose and extended almost to his left ear, giving his face a frightful expression. This man, with one arm passed about the body of the young mute, held her up while he made her walk through the forest paths; while the other thieves, by their manner and conversation, increased every instant the fright of Sister Anne.

The thieves inhabited a miserable hut in the thickest part of the forest, where they passed the day, living like poor wood-cutters. They took care to conceal their arms in a cave which they had dug under their retreat; but at night they armed themselves to the teeth and stationed themselves on the road, where they attacked travellers if they believed themselves strong enough to overcome them.

Sister Anne was surprised at the length of the road which led to the house of these men, and still more so at the difficult paths through which she was obliged to find her way. At last, after an hour's walk, they made her descend into a ravine, across a thick jungle of brushwood. A little light was visible, which came from the window of a hut. The thieves whistled several times, and a woman was not slow in opening the door.

The sight of one of her own sex for a moment restored the courage of Sister Anne, but when she looked at the woman who stood on the threshold of the cabin, she felt her dawning hopes vanish away, for the appearance of the thieves' companion was not calculated to bring calm to the soul of an unhappy traveller. This woman was of great height, and of a fearful emaciation, with very pronounced features, and an expression of calm cruelty which seemed to say that she was absolutely devoid of feeling. She was livid in color, a red handkerchief covered her head, and some rags of clothes scarcely concealed her distorted body.

"We are home; it's us, Christine," cried the robbers, as they approached the cabin. "We've taken a prize. We've brought you a companion with whom you'll not dispute much."

At these words Christine advanced toward them, and tearing the lantern from Franck threw its light into Sister Anne's face, and, after examining her attentively, said in a harsh voice, —

"What's all this about?"

"Why, it's a woman, don't you see? But it's a rare woman; she's a deaf mute."

"A deaf mute! Great find, my faith! and what are you going to do with her?"

"Oh, that's my business," cried Red Top, in a voice which resounded through the echoes of the forest. "I have taken this woman for myself. She pleases me; she suits me exactly. Don't you look crosswise at her, or I'll hang you to the tallest pine in the forest."

This threat did not frighten Christine, who continued to look at the young girl, and on perceiving her condition smiled ironically and murmured some scornful words between her teeth.

A blow which made her recoil several feet was Red Top's response to the remark of the hideous Christine. She approached him with a threatening air, but Pierre threw himself between them.

"Let up, children!" he cried; "that's enough of this game. We don't want to have any more rows here. Go on, Christine, and get our supper ready. We are as hungry as wolves."

While this altercation went on between the thieves and their companion, the unfortunate mute felt a sensation of horror, of fright, such as she had never known before. The sight of this woman, the propositions of these men, whose ferocity she began to divine, the appearance of their dreadful retreat,—all this made her realize the

dangers with which she was surrounded. But what could she do? What would become of her? She would gladly have been far from this den. She would have preferred the severest cold in the open forest to such a shelter as this; but it was no longer possible to fly, and besides, they had taken her treasure, they had stolen her money and her clothes. Or did they expect to return them to her? She did not dare to hope for this, and at each instant she found a new cause for her terror. Her whole body trembled; her teeth chattered; her knees sank from under her. "Look," cried Red Top, as he supported her; "we've frightened the pretty traveller to death. Never mind; it's all right, little woman. Come in and warm yourself."

The thieves entered the cottage, which was divided into two parts. The first was the apartment which the inhabitants of this horrible place usually occupied. There they ate, and slept upon bundles of straw thrown in a corner. A chimney in which a great fire was lighted warmed the room, which was the largest and brightest in the cabin. The side room had no chimney, but only a window looking into the forest. Christine slept there, and used it as storeroom for provisions and firewood.

At sight of this horrible place Sister Anne paused in the doorway, and had not strength to advance. The interior was dirty and blackened by smoke. One corner was filled with the straw

on which the men slept, their arms hung from the wall, and the air was heavy with the odor of some huge pieces of meat which were roasting before the fire, for the supper of the robbers. Red Top carried in Sister Anne, and seated her before the fire, saying,—

"Quiet down, now, and get warm. The supper will make you feel better."

"Imbecile! You talk to her as if she could hear you," cried Jacques.

"That's true. I'd forgotten all about it."

"And how do you know she's deaf?" said Franck. "Perhaps she's making believe; she may be only mute."

"Then we should have to cut out her tongue," replied Red Top. "But it's easy to see that she's both, and that she can't talk because she's deaf. Ah, you don't understand that, you others; but as to me, you see I've travelled, and I'm less stupid than you. So I know that deaf mutes are only dumb because they can't hear. Besides, watch this woman; it's very easy to see that she don't hear anything we say."

Sister Anne was so overcome by terror, suffering and fatigue that, since her entrance into the cottage, she had seemed unconscious of all that passed about her. But she heard the conversation of the brigands very distinctly, and a half-recognized presentiment warned her not to correct the error of the bandits. It was much better they

should believe her deaf. In that case they would not hesitate to speak of their projects and designs in her presence. She would then know what to hope and what to fear; and, without intending it, her captors might provide her with the opportunity to escape. This hope sustained the courage of the young girl, and she endeavored to conceal the emotion which the thieves' conversation roused in her.

The brigands laid aside their arms while they were waiting for supper, and entertained one another with a recital of their great deeds. The poor little mute saw with horror that she was in the company of scoundrels capable of every crime; but she drew courage from the excess of her despair. She knew the extent of the perils that threatened her, and saw that she could only free herself from them by cleverness and address. If death struck her alone, she would not have dreaded it, but she wished to preserve the life of the little one she carried within. Maternal love has inspired many acts of heroism. This sentiment sustained Sister Anne, and gave her strength to cope with her frightful situation.

Christine set a table in the midst of the chamber, and covered it with glasses, bottles, and meat. The thieves sat down and began to eat their supper; they gave themselves up freely to the expression of their brutal joy. Sister Anne remained seated before the fire; Red Top brought her some

wine, some bread and roast meat. She bowed her thanks to him, and forced herself to eat a little, both to restore her strength and conceal her terror.

"You see that woman, there," said Red Top to his companions. "Well, I'll wager she's as sweet as a lamb. I'll do anything I please with her."

"Don't trust to manners," said Christine, who had seated herself near the thieves. "It's easy to fool men with such airs, and faces are deceitful."

"Yours is not, for you look like a sister of Lucifer."

This pleasantry made all the gentlemen laugh; they filled their glasses and emptied them rapidly; the more they drank, the more they talked. The dreadful Christine was at their head. Red Top alone was thinking of Sister Anne, and he did not entirely lose his head.

"Where do you suppose this woman came from?" asked one of the thieves. "She doesn't seem like a woman that works in the fields."

"Parbleu! it's some girl that's been betrayed. Her lover has left her, and she's running over the world to find him. That's the history of all the girls that listen to gentlemen."

Sister Anne dried the tears that began to run down her cheeks, for she felt that this man had spoken the truth.

"Thunder!" said Christine, "if I had a girl

and she made a misstep, I'd strangle her with my own hands."

"Now look at that," said Jacques. "It's a pity you haven't any children, they would have been so handsome."

"I don't care what this woman is," said Red Top. "She's not going away from here; and you, Christine, don't you interfere with her, or you remember what I promised you."

"Yes, I'd like to see you do it. Wait; you'd better go and console her. I believe she's crying now. Give her a kiss."

"Yes, and we too!" cried the other thieves, heated by the fumes of the wine. "We'll console her too! Let's all give her a little hug. It'll cheer her up."

As they said this, Red Top's three companions rose to go toward Sister Anne, but the red head placed himself between them, took a pistol in each hand and exclaimed in a formidable voice,—

"Don't you go a step nearer, or I'll kill you! This woman is mine! She belongs to me, for I found her on the road when you, imbeciles, would have passed right by; you didn't see her at all. It was I who wanted to bring her here. I said I would make her my wife, and, death of my life! if any man touches her I'll kill him!"

These words stopped the thieves, who knew their companion, and were aware that the consequences would follow the threat very quickly; so

they contented themselves with laughing at the jealousy of Red Top. Sister Anne, frozen with terror at this scene, withdrew to a corner of the room, and threw herself on her knees before the thieves.

Red Top approached her and endeavored to tranquillize her; then, for fear of a new enterprise on the part of his comrades, he took her into the other room, showed her a wretched bed, and made her a sign that she was to rest there; then he went out and closed the door upon her.

Sister Anne was alone in a tiny apartment, where there was no light; but the wall was badly joined, and allowed the brilliance from the other room to enter, so she was able to distinguish things about her. The young girl had pretended to prepare herself for repose on the wretched mattress; but she rose presently, and, lending an attentive ear, listened to what the thieves were saying. They continued to drink and sing.

If she could only escape while this was going on! She felt all about, she found a window which should open on the forest, and the house was so near the ground she could easily jump out. But presently her hand came in contact with strong bars which closed the window and opposed her passage. Poor little thing! she experienced a shock of disappointment more cruel than anything she had endured before. At the very moment when she thought she was certain to recover her

liberty, she lost her last hope; when she saw no longer any possibility of escaping from this horrible prison, it seemed as if she were dying a second death. She fell fainting upon the couch, and endeavored to stifle in her hands the groans that escaped from her bosom.

CHAPTER IX

The Stranger

The long and tedious night passed in this manner; the thieves at length fell asleep before the fire and, fortunately for poor Sister Anne, their infamous companion did the same, which prevented her from taking her usual place on the mattress beside the prisoner.

The unfortunate girl lay awake through the long night, listening eagerly and trembling with fear at the slightest sound that became audible from the next room, and praying earnestly to kind Heaven that it would send some one to liberate her.

Morning, however, brought new terrors to the helpless girl. At daybreak the thieves awakened, they hastily hid their murderous weapons and started into the forest to resume their pretended occupation as woodcutters. But before they did so Red Top went into the smaller room where Sister Anne lay to speak to her; he smiled at the defenceless and terrified child, chucked her under the chin, and muttered between his teeth, "This evening, my beauty, when I come from the wood I'll say two words to you." The unfortunate

girl was obliged to submit to these horrible caresses. It was only by a great effort that she restrained her indignation; but he departed to follow his companions, after he had warned Christine to watch over the young woman.

When Sister Anne was alone with the thieves' companion she was obliged to endure all the ill humor of this wretched creature, who was jealous of her presence, and in revenge sought to cover the poor girl with insults, knowing that she could not complain of her. She laughed at her tears and at her prayers, and the poor little thing felt that she should die if she were not soon saved from this horrible prison.

It was night when the four brigands returned. They snatched some food and then took their arms. Red Top did not follow their example.

"Well, and aren't you going to take a run with us tonight?" asked his companions.

"No, not yet; I'll join you later; but this evening I want to say two words to my little mute."

As he said this a frightful smile glittered in the eyes of the bandit, whose gaze rested each instant on Sister Anne.

"All right, I understand," said Pierre. "We'll let it pass for this evening, but love ought not to make you forget your duty."

"And if we should run across another post-chaise," said Jacques, "we can't attack it."

"But that's not very likely to happen just this once. Besides, I'll rejoin you later."

"Good, good; we'll let it pass this time, and if we take a big prize he'll have no share in it."

"That's perfectly fair, comrades."

As the thieves went out they looked back and smiled at the young mute, who did not yet divine the danger which threatened her, nor did she understand the smile of the brigands. Seeing that Red Top did not follow his companions, she shuddered with fear, and her eyes sought Christine, as if she hoped for protection from the woman; but Christine glanced with a mocking air from one to the other, and then entered the adjoining chamber, closing the door violently behind her.

Sister Anne made a movement as if to follow the thieves' companion, but when she saw that this was impossible she fell back upon the pile of straw where she had been sitting; a convulsive trembling seized her,—she was alone with the brigand.

Red Top seated himself before the fireplace and stirred the fire; then he lit a pipe and smoked for some moments, interrupting himself only to drink and to look at Sister Anne. The poor girl sat trembling in the corner of the room, where she had gone to be as far as possible from the thief, who threw his inflamed glance upon her, as he exclaimed from time to time, "Very good. Thousand thunders! she has superb eyes, and mighty

fine teeth. She'll look still better in a few months, too; but she's well enough now, and these fools, who couldn't see that. Oh, I wouldn't give her up, comrades! We don't often take such fine prizes."

These words increased the terror of the poor mute, which redoubled when Red Top, who had not remained at home merely to smoke and drink, made her a sign to approach him; she pretended not to understand, and lowered her eyes. Then the thief rose and advanced toward her. The young girl scarcely breathed. The brigand threw himself beside her on the straw. She tried to rise and leave him, but he held her forcibly, and putting his arm around her bent his horrible face to her head. The poor little thing covered her eyes with her hand so as not to see the bandit.

"Halloo! you might think she trembled," cried Red Top, as he burst into a fit of ferocious laughter. "Why, really, my dear, I didn't mean to be cruel to you. Anyone can see you have not been used to that."

As he said this he approached still nearer and tried to kiss the lips of the young girl; but she recalled her courage with a great effort, and repulsed him with all her force, and then, profiting by his surprise, she rose quickly and ran to the other end of the chamber, placing the table before her from which the thieves had eaten supper.

Red Top looked at her in astonishment; but

he merely smiled again, and said, "Oh, you are going to give us a little bad temper. Well, that's really funny. Do you think you can resist me?"

The thief rose, and walked towards Sister Anne. With a powerful kick he sent the table to the other end of the room; then he seized the young mute, who struggled in vain, and lifting her in his arms carried her to the pile of straw which he had just quitted. Sister Anne collected all her courage, all her strength to resist the brigand who intended to triumph over her. He laughed at first at her defence and her opposition; but at length he became furious at her obstinate resistance, and did his best to overpower the poor girl. This horrible struggle lasted a long time, but the unfortunate child felt her strength diminish. Tears and sobs strangled her, and she might have become the prey of the scoundrel, when suddenly heavy blows resounded on the door of the hut.

"Who the devil is coming now?" cried the thief. "My comrades can make all the fuss they want to, but I shan't open the door."

At this moment a strange voice was heard exclaiming, "Open the door, please! Save me and you will be well rewarded!"

This voice was not that of any of Red Top's companions. The thief stopped in confusion, and listened in terror, while Sister Anne threw herself on her knees and thanked Heaven, which had come to her succor.

Christine came quickly from the other chamber and ran to Red Top with an anxious air. "They are knocking, do you hear?" she said. "It is a strange voice."

"Yes, morbleu! I hear it well. Go and look out of the window, and try to see if it is only one man."

Christine went, and came back in a moment saying, "Yes, he is all alone."

"In that case we will open," said Red Top, "but we'll be prudent until our friends come back."

After he had replaced the table in the middle of the room Red Top took his pipe again and seated himself before the fire, while Christine opened the door to the person who had just knocked.

The stranger who entered the cabin was an elderly man. His dress bespoke easy circumstances, and his manners were those of high rank; but he was without a hat, his clothes were in disorder, and the pallor of his countenance testified to the fright he had sustained. He hurried into the cabin, and scarcely seemed to breathe until he saw that the door was closed and bolted after him.

"Pardon, pardon, good people," he said, turning to Red Top and Christine. "You see I am very much upset. I have undoubtedly disturbed your evening, but in opening your door to me you have saved my life."

"Why, how is that, monsieur?" said Red Top, with an air of interest.

"I've just been attacked, my friends. It was down there on the road which crosses the forest. I was in my carriage with my servant. The postilion urged on the horses. Suddenly the brigands ran out of the woods, sprang at the horses' heads, and fired in the postilion's face. The poor fellow fell dead; the carriage stopped; they made me alight with my servant, while one of the thieves searched the vehicle. During this time I took advantage of the moment when these wretches had not their eyes upon me and I plunged into the forest, choosing always the thickest and most remote paths. At last I reached here, the light from your window guiding me, and I knocked at your door."

"You have done well, monsieur," said Red Top, looking at Christine significantly. "Sit down before the fire. You are safe; get warm and comfortable."

"Oh, you are too good," said the traveller, seating himself beside the fire. "But my unfortunate servant,—what do you suppose has become of him? Will they kill him?"

"Oh, that's not probable. After they have robbed him they will let him go free. They killed the postilion because they had to stop him. Oh, I know all about that; there are a great many robbers in this cursed forest."

"I ought not to have taken this road. It was out of my way, but I wanted to see the country."

"And these rascals, — did they rob you, monsieur?"

"No, thank Heaven; they were about to do so when I ran away. I have at least saved my pocketbook and my purse."

"Well, my faith, that's very lucky," said Red Top, looking again at Christine. "Never mind, monsieur; settle down and try to forget this horrible event. We will do our best to entertain you, but you mustn't think of leaving before tomorrow; that would be very imprudent."

"That was not my intention, if you will be kind enough to let me stay."

"Why, of course, it would give us great pleasure. Go on, Christine; be quick; get our guest some supper."

While this conversation was going on Sister Anne did not cease to examine the stranger. Although his face was severe, she thought it inspired interest and respect. She trembled as she realized that this man had only escaped one peril to fall into another. She knew now all the rascality of the inhabitants of this hovel. She feared for the life of the traveller. Her eyes were constantly fixed upon him, as if they would warn him of the dangers which surrounded him.

But the stranger had not yet seen the young girl who was seated on the ground in the corner

of the room. He had scarcely recovered from the emotion which he had experienced. He approached the fire and rarely looked about him.

"It is very lucky that the thieves did not follow you," said Red Top, as he offered the traveller a glass of wine.

"Well, as I fled, I heard a great noise of horses' feet, and I think that was what saved me."

"Oh, you heard horses coming?" asked Red Top with great anxiety.

"Yes; at least, I thought so. I was very much excited. It was either more brigands or the police in pursuit of them."

"Well, yes; it might have been that."

"I have been in many battles, but I confess I do not love to meet thieves. Bravery is often useless against such wretches; besides, I had no arms with me."

"Oh, you had no arms?"

"No; I left my pistols in the carriage, and they didn't give me time to get them."

Red Top appeared to be reflecting; since the stranger had spoken of hearing the noise of horses' feet upon the road, he had not been so much at ease.

"I suppose you are a wood-cutter," said the traveller.

"Yes, monsieur, I am a wood-cutter, and there is my wife," said Red Top, pointing to Christine, who was putting the supper on the table.

"And are you not afraid in the midst of this forest?"

"Why, what have we to be afraid of? We are not rich enough to tempt thieves. Go on, Christine; hurry up. Monsieur will want to rest a little after he has eaten his supper."

"Oh, there's no hurry about it."

The stranger had become more calm, and began to look about him with some interest. As he examined the chamber where he was, he at last saw Sister Anne, seated upon a bundle of straw. Her eyes were fixed upon him with an expression so strange that he could not fail to notice it. The traveller was surprised, and he studied the face of the young mute for some time with much attention. Her features were pale and bore traces of her suffering. He seemed astonished at the manner in which she looked at him.

"Who is this young girl?" he said, addressing Christine. "I had not noticed her before."

"That? Oh, she's nothing very much," replied the big woman in a dry tone.

"Is she not your child?"

"No, monsieur," said Red Top; "she is an unfortunate deaf mute. I found her in the forest, and we have taken her in for charity. She is about to become a mother, and I felt very sorry for her."

"That feeling does you honor, monsieur. This unfortunate girl is so young, and has such a sweet

face. Do you know where she came from, or the name of her parents?"

"How the devil should I know anything about a deaf and dumb woman; and anyway, it doesn't matter. She is almost imbecile, I believe, but I will keep her here."

As she heard these words Sister Anne rose, and advanced softly toward the stranger. She looked at him always with the same glance of interest and compassion.

"Well, what's she doing now?" said Red Top. "The poor girl has really lost her reason. Here, Christine; make her go into the other room. It is time she went to bed."

Christine pushed the little mute roughly to force her into the adjoining chamber. Sister Anne decided to go with much regret. She did not wish to lose sight of the traveller, in whom she felt a lively interest; but she must obey. She walked slowly toward the other room, looking at the stranger until the last moment. Touched by her attention, he followed her with his eyes until the door of the other room closed upon her.

Christine had entered the little chamber with Sister Anne. She looked out of the window and seemed troubled because the other brigands had not returned. The young mute had thrown herself upon her couch, not to sleep, but to think of some means of saving the stranger, of warning him of the danger which threatened him if he

remained in the cabin. How could she approach him to make him comprehend it? At this moment Red Top entered the chamber, closing the door after him carefully; then he approached Christine, and, as he believed that Sister Anne could not hear, he did not hesitate to discuss his plans.

"Well, now, you don't hear them coming?" said Red Top.

"No; I have heard nothing."

"It's very singular; it's a long time since this man came. What can they be doing in the forest? I feel very uneasy; this traveller spoke of horses and of the police. If our friends have been arrested?"

"The devil! You don't think they would betray us?"

"Listen. When this stranger has eaten his supper and gone to sleep, I will go out and see if I can discover what has happened. If our fellows are in the forest, I know where to find them. If they have been taken, or have run off, we will take advantage of the stranger's sleep to get rid of him, and with what he has on him we'll do pretty well if we make ourselves safe by leaving the forest."

"That's a fine thought; give this man a good supper, so that he will sleep quickly, then when you come back we shall know what to do. Meanwhile, I'll lie down and get a little sleep."

"Yes; don't be uneasy. I'll wake you up when I need you."

Red Top went out to rejoin the traveller, and the hideous Christine threw herself upon the bed by the side of Sister Anne. It is impossible to say what this poor child felt as she lay beside this woman who had just planned a murder with the most revolting coolness; but the poor little thing did not stir. She had heard the entire conversation of these wretches; she had not lost a word of their plans, and she still hoped to save the stranger. Only one thought troubled her,—the fear that the three other thieves might return, when all would be lost. Her only resource would be to see the unhappy traveller die, or perish with him.

Christine had scarcely thrown herself upon the bed when a long snore announced that she had fallen asleep. Sister Anne arose softly, left the couch and applied her eye to a hole in the wall by which she could see into the other room.

The stranger was quietly eating his supper. Red Top was trying to entertain him, but at every instant he listened with anxiety for some sound in the forest, and urged the traveller to go immediately to bed. Sister Anne studied the old gentleman at her ease, and the longer she looked at him the more deeply she was interested in him. She felt an attachment for him which was not entirely explained by the singular situation in which they

both were. At every little noise, when the wind blew the branches against the wall, or whirled the dry leaves, the young girl shivered with mortal terror, fearing the return of the three brigands; while, on the contrary, the face of Red Top lighted up with joy, and he ran to the door, hoping to hear his companions approaching.

"Are you expecting someone?" inquired the stranger.

"No, monsieur, — no one; but I am afraid of the thieves, — I have been listening for them all the evening. I begin to think you have escaped their pursuit and you can sleep in peace."

"I will lie down until dawn, when I will ask you to be kind enough to guide me to the next village."

"Yes, monsieur, with great pleasure; but sleep at your ease; dawn is still far away. There is the only bed that I can offer you, but the straw is fresh. I am sorry I cannot offer you something better, but we are so poor."

"Oh, I shall do very well; don't trouble at all about me."

As he spoke the stranger stretched himself upon the straw, where he sought repose, and Red Top remained sitting before the fire, turning his head from time to time to look at the traveller, to see if he had gone to sleep. The young mute, her eye fixed on the opening in the wall, did not lose sight either of the stranger or of the thief,

and she prayed Heaven that Christine might not wake up.

At last the traveller appeared to have fallen asleep, and Red Top rose to take his weapons into the cave, the opening of which was closed by a plank and concealed by a heap of straw. Sister Anne trembled. What if the thief should kill the old man immediately? But no; after he had closed the cave he went softly out of the hut, muttering to himself,—

"Now I'll go to the usual rendezvous, and if they are not there I'll come back as quick as I can."

Red Top opened the door of the hovel quietly and disappeared. The moment for action had arrived; the young mute collected all her courage, and emerged from the chamber, walking with great precaution, so as not to waken Christine, and double-locking the door to prevent her coming out in case she should awake. The flame which played on the hearth was the only light in the chamber where the traveller slept. Sister Anne approached him, took him by the arm and shook him with considerable force. The old man was aroused; he looked with astonishment at the young girl who leaned over him, and whose features expressed the most vivid anxiety. He was about to speak, but she quickly put her finger on his lips and looked about her with terror, her eyes warning him to preserve absolute silence.

The stranger rose and awaited with anxiety the explanation of this mysterious scene.

Sister Anne ran to the cave, succeeded in removing the barrier, and, taking from the hearth a piece of blazing wood, she made signs to the traveller to approach, and showed him the interior of the cave. It contained arms and clothing of every description, and the blood with which this last was spattered showed how it had been gained.

The traveller trembled.

"Good God!" he said; "have I stumbled into the brigands' retreat?"

The young girl made an affirmative sign, and running to the straw showed him that they intended to assassinate him in his sleep.

The stranger immediately seized a pair of pistols which he found at the entrance of the cave.

"At least," he said, "I will sell my life dearly; but you, poor woman,—what will you do?"

Sister Anne did not give him time to finish; she ran to open the door of the hut, making him understand that he must hasten to fly, and that she would accompany him. The stranger took her by the hand; they left the hovel. At this moment Christine, who had heard the noise, awakened, and tried to leave her chamber. Finding herself imprisoned, she cried out, called Red Top, ran to the window which looked upon the forest, and saw the stranger and the young girl hastening away.

"Curse it! they are running off!" cried Christine, as she tried to break the bars of the window.

The old gentleman pointed his pistol at her, but Sister Anne stopped him and made him understand that the report of the weapon would attract the thieves. The stranger felt that she was right, and, leaving Christine hurling her curses after them, they ran, and were soon far from the brigands' den.

After having wandered for more than an hour through the forest pathways, trembling at every sound lest they should encounter Red Top and his companions, the fugitives heard the hoofbeats of many horses, which might mean the police sent in search of the brigands. The stranger and the young girl turned in the direction from which the sound came, and presently a man passed them in full flight. It was Red Top, pursued by a horseman, while another man, also mounted, followed, crying out when he saw the stranger,—

"There is my master! Thank Heaven, the scoundrels haven't killed him!"

The traveller pointed out the brigands' retreat to the police, and then, mounting a horse which his servant was leading for him, he took up behind him the young woman who had saved him, and they left the forest at a fast trot.

During the ride the stranger was unceasing in his expressions of gratitude to his liberator, and

she in turn thanked Heaven that she had been saved from the power of the thieves.

The servant told his master that a few minutes after his escape into the forest the police had appeared. The brigands thought only of saving themselves, but at the first attack two of them fell mortally wounded. Then, taking the two horses that the thieves had already unharnessed from the carriage, the servant was mounted on one and led the other for his master, and the guards searched the forest everywhere in an effort to find the lost gentleman.

The peril passed is soon forgotten. They reached a town of considerable size, and the travellers knocked at a farmhouse, where they were hospitably received, and the best care was taken of them. The young mute was especially in need of immediate attention. The frightful situation in which she had been for the last two days, the danger she had escaped, and the courageous exertion she had made during this terrible night,—all these circumstances had weighed heavily upon the unfortunate girl, who was not in a condition to endure so much. They carried her to a good bed. The farm people, learning of the situation in which the young girl was placed, and that she had saved the traveller's life, showed the most tender interest in her; and the stranger would not go to rest until he was assured that everything had been done for his young liberator.

The next day the carriage was brought out for them to resume their journey, since the stranger wished to set forth; but Sister Anne had been seized by a burning fever, and he would not leave until he knew that she was safe. The best physician in the neighborhood was sent for, and the unknown gentleman spent his money freely, so that the young mute might have every attention that her condition demanded; he passed a part of the day in her chamber, and he added his cares to those of the farm people.

Sister Anne realized all the stranger's kindness, and her heart was deeply moved. In spite of the pain from which she suffered, she seized one of the stranger's hands and pressed it with gratitude.

"Poor girl!" said the traveller, much touched. "I will not leave you until I know that you are out of danger. I wished to take you with me in my carriage and carry you to your destination. What can I do for you? I see that you understand me, but you cannot speak. Do you know how to write?"

The young mute made a negative sign, and then all at once a memory seemed to revive in her, and she moved her fingers as if she were tracing characters. The old gentleman gave her a pen and some paper,—she could not use them; he gave her a bit of chalk, and, raising herself in her bed, she leaned over the table placed beside it, and succeeded with great effort in tracing the

name of Frederic, then she pointed to it, while her eyes seemed to say, "That is all I know."

The traveller, surprised when he read the name she had written, looked at her with new interest.

"And your name?" said the stranger. "Do you not know how to write that?"

Sister Anne shook her head and traced again the name of Frederic.

For five days Sister Anne's illness was so severe that her life was in danger, and the stranger would not leave the farm. At the end of that time the physician pronounced her out of danger; but he said that for a long time she would be very delicate, and it would be imprudent for her to leave the farm before she became a mother.

On hearing this, Sister Anne's eyes filled with tears. She was afraid of being a burden to the good people who had received her so kindly, but the stranger did his best to calm and console her.

"I have made provision for everything," he said. "Stay here until you are well again, and, if nothing calls you elsewhere, make your home with the inhabitants of this farm. They love you; you will be happy here."

Sister Anne shook her head sorrowfully, indicating that she wished to go on. The stranger, who had given twenty-five louis to the farm people for their care of the young woman, also put a purse of gold into the hands of his rescuer, who tried to refuse it, and to show her gratitude.

"You owe me nothing, my child," said the old gentleman to her; "remember, you saved my life, and as long as I live I am in debt to you. Here, keep this paper, which contains my name and address, and if you are ever in trouble, don't fail to let me know. You can always count upon my protection."

Sister Anne took the paper and folded it carefully away in the purse the stranger had given her. The old gentleman, looking at her with great tenderness, kissed her forehead, and then hastened away from her expressions of gratitude. He entered his carriage and was driven away, leaving many marks of generosity at the farm.

The stranger was gone, and Sister Anne was very sorrowful. Her heart went out to this unknown, whom she unconsciously united in her memory with Frederic; but the tender friendship she felt for the one did not lessen the love she experienced for the other.

CHAPTER X

They Are Married

Frederic had now arrived at that stage of his new love affair when he did not allow a day to pass without his seeing Constance; since the two young people had mutually confessed their love, the feeling between them seemed constantly to increase. Mademoiselle de Valmont loved with the abandon of a pure and innocent heart which yields to the tender passion for the first time, and which seeks to hide nothing that it feels. She was proud of the love with which she had inspired Frederic, and found all her happiness in reciprocating it.

Frederic, more ardent, more impetuous, yielded to the feeling which led him, but in loving Constance he could not as yet be entirely happy; he needed to get rid of his thoughts of lonely Sister Anne in her cottage in the wood, which brought self-reproach, to stifle memories which disturbed his happiness. Like those people who never look behind them for fear of seeing something to frighten them, Frederic drove away the half-sweet and half-regretful recollections which carried him back to a still recent epoch. He wished to think

only of Constance, knowing well that henceforth hers must be the only image in his heart. And what was the use of sighing when his sigh would not console her whom he had abandoned? He might say that to himself, but even in his happiest moments there was at the bottom of his soul a voice which reproached him for what he had done. There are some people without conscience who are the only ones who will not understand this.

The Count of Montreville had been gone a fortnight, and, although Frederic did not know the object of his father's journey, he suspected what it might be; but he had no desire to profit by his absence and leave the city himself. Could he have quitted Constance for a single day? Although she had reassured him in regard to the marriage which had roused his anxiety, yet he besought his sweetheart to question her uncle on this subject. Constance hardly dared to speak to the General; but, yielding to Frederic's solicitations, she decided at last to ask him, and one morning went into his study blushing very red.

"Dear uncle, I have heard that you are making plans regarding me," said Constance, dropping her eyes.

The General looked at her smiling, and then tried to be very serious; but such an expression did not fit his countenance.

"Who told you, mademoiselle, that I had made plans about you?"

"Why, uncle, it was Monsieur Frederic, and he said his father had told him."

"Oh, the devil! So Monsieur Frederic interests himself in them? And what are these plans, mademoiselle?"

"Dear uncle, you must know better than I."

"Ah, that's true; you're right. Well, yes; I have some plans."

"Are they for my establishment, dear uncle?" asked Constance, trembling.

"Yes; to marry you, in fact."

"To marry me! Is it possible! Dear uncle, how can you?" and the lovely girl turned to the General her supplicating eyes, full of tears.

"There, there, my dear; don't worry," said the General, taking the hand of his niece; "you are already in the field. As if I wanted to make you unhappy! Don't you want to get married?"

"Well, I didn't say that, uncle."

"Then why all this excitement because I want to find you a husband?"

"But because I want — I don't want — "

"You want, and you don't want! Women will never speak clearly! Hum! Why don't you say right out that you do not wish to marry anyone except Frederic?"

"O uncle! do you know?"

"Anyone would have to be blind not to see that. And how about this fine gentleman, who decides to marry my niece, and who sighs and is

melancholy, and breaks his heart, instead of coming frankly to ask her hand?"

"O dear uncle! do you like it?"

"And haven't I got into a habit of liking what pleases you?"

"But this marriage with the colonel?"

"That's a tale which my old friend invented, I don't know exactly why; but he came and begged me to allow him to tell it. To please him I consented, though I do not comprehend all these mysteries. It seems to me that when young people are in love and confess it, there is no need of marches and countermarches, to get them married. Never mind; Montreville has his tactics, and one can't distract him from them. Don't tell Frederic about it, for his father does not wish him to know; but when the Count returns — and that will be soon — I will put an end to these fictions, and unite you to your lover, who will make himself sick with his sighing."

Constance kissed her uncle and left him, quite radiant with the certainty of her happiness. Presently Frederic returned to her, and inquired anxiously as to what the General had said.

Constance endeavored to conceal her joy. No matter how much a woman loves, she is not unwilling to see her lover disturbed a little, because in the torments he feels she sees new proofs of his love.

"Well," said Frederic with impatience, "you

don't answer me. Is it true that your uncle was thinking of a plan for marrying you? Did you ask him about it?"

"Why, yes; he has been thinking of my marriage."

"Then I was right!" he exclaimed, springing up in a way that made Constance tremble. "He was thinking of it! They told me the truth! But they shall not tear my love from me."

"Dear friend, do not excite yourself."

"You tell me not to excite myself, when they want to marry you to someone else! Constance, if your uncle is a tyrant, I will carry you away! We will fly together to the end of the world, to the end — of the universe! You alone are enough for my happiness! We will go this evening, if you will consent. What, mademoiselle! you are laughing at my despair!"

"O Frederic! how hot-headed you are!"

"Ah, mademoiselle wishes to give me some lessons in wisdom. It seems to me the idea of this marriage does not afflict you very much. Is that how you love me?"

"You horrid thing! what a reproach! But, my friend, do not think, because my love is quieter than yours, that it is not just as strong."

"But what about your uncle's plan?"

"And suppose it was to you, monsieur, that he thought of marrying me?"

"To me!"

Frederic's features were instantly lighted by a new expression, and Constance put her finger on his lips, saying, "Hush! silence, dear friend! My uncle told me not to speak of it to you; but lately, you see, I cannot help—"

"What, Constance! Do you mean it? Oh, what joy! Your uncle is the best of men; oh, let me go and throw myself at his feet!"

"No, no, truly! Because he'll scold me. I shall never be able to make you reasonable. Sit down here, monsieur, beside me."

"Well, then, when can I tell him that I love you?"

"When your father returns—it will not be long. Do you know where he has gone?"

"Why, no, I don't think so; I am not certain."

"Now, see, dear friend, you look sad again."

"Me? No, I'm not! I swear it!"

"When we were not certain of our happiness, I could pardon you these dreamy airs and the moments of sorrow which seize you so often, when you are near me; but realize, monsieur, that I don't like these moods at all. My dear, you have sorrows, secret anxieties, that you do not confide to Constance. Is it not so?"

"No, no; not at all!"

"Promise me that you will tell me all, absolutely all; that I shall have your entire confidence. Don't you think that when two people

are engaged they ought to tell each other everything?"

"Oh, yes, dear Constance, I promise you I will tell you all my thoughts."

Frederic prevaricated somewhat, but the fib was excusable, for at the time a complete confession would not have given great pleasure to Constance, who was convinced that her lover thought of no one but herself, and who, in spite of her gentleness, her sweetness and confidence, was too desperately in love with Frederic not to be susceptible to jealousy, a sentiment which is almost always a part of love with women.

The Count of Montreville returned to Paris after an absence of nearly a month. Under any other circumstances Frederic would have been surprised at the length of this journey, which might easily have been finished in two weeks; but he was so much occupied with Constance that he paid little attention to what went on around him. Nevertheless, at seeing his father again, memories of Dauphiny rose in his mind, and he was embarrassed as he stood before him, not daring to question him.

On the other hand, a change appeared to have taken place in the Count, who was deeply preoccupied with some recent event, and was often thoughtful and sad, looking at his son as if he both desired and feared an explanation. At last Frederic ventured first to open the subject with

his father, and, greatly to his surprise, the Count's manner did not change; he did not assume the cold and severe air which had been usual with him whenever Dauphiny was mentioned.

"You have been in Dauphiny," said Frederic. "Did you go to Vizille?"

"Yes," said the Count; "I have been through the whole neighborhood — the wood in which you spent so long a time —"

"And did you see that — that young girl?"

"No, I did not see her. Some days before I reached there she had left her cottage, and an old herdsman lived in the place."

"What! Sister Anne was not in her cottage? And Marguerite?"

"The old woman had been dead for several months."

"Sister Anne has gone away! Poor little thing! What will become of her? With her affliction how can she get on, how can she make herself understood? Ah, the unfortunate child!"

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed the Count, fixing his eyes upon his son, an expression of the most lively interest in them. "What is the matter with this girl? Why is she so much to be pitied? Answer me, Frederic!"

"Father, Sister Anne has not been able to speak since she was seven years old. A frightful event, a terrible shock, deprived her of the power of speech."

"Great God!" cried the Count, vividly struck by what he had heard. "It was she. I divined it."

Frederic did not hear his father's last words, absorbed as he was in thought of Sister Anne. He saw her wandering helpless and unsheltered through trackless forests and open fields, driven from the inns, and everywhere a prey to misery and unhappiness. He realized that this was his fault, that if he had not endeavored to inspire in this young girl a violent passion she would have lived peacefully in the depth of her wood, not desiring pleasures she did not know, and not longing for the happiness of a different existence. At this moment remorse overwhelmed Frederic, and he reproached himself sharply for his conduct toward a woman whom he had ceased to love, but who would always be dear to him.

For a long time the Count and his son were plunged in their reflections. The Count at last broke the silence, his voice trembling a little as he spoke to Frederic.

"Don't worry about the fate of this young girl; I found her."

"You found her, father? How is that possible?"

"Yes, at a farm in the neighborhood of Grenoble. I left her there, and I have made a sort of arrangement with the people so that she will be taken care of."

"But how did it happen? You could not recognize her."

"Well, her misfortune, her youth. I became greatly interested in her; something told me she was the person I was looking for, and now I know it, since you tell me she is a mute. I repeat, don't worry about her future. I left her with kind people, who love her, and she will be happy with them. Besides, I shall take care to watch over her fate."

The Count purposely did not tell his son of his adventure in the forest, and of all that Sister Anne had done for him, having a fear that if Frederic heard the story of how the young girl had saved his father's life, his love for her might revive in all its pristine strength. He did not wish the young man to suspect that the mute was about to become a mother; that might disarrange all his plans.

The Count had become deeply interested in Sister Anne, and he promised himself to look after her future and to take care of her child. He was, however, not less determined to accomplish the marriage between his son and the niece of his old friend, and to do this he considered it very necessary to conceal everything in regard to the poor orphan. On his arrival at Paris he had expressly forbidden his servant to mention his adventure in the forest and the young woman they had left at the farm.

Frederic was restored to happiness by the assurance his father gave him that Sister Anne was with

kind people, and that in future she would be provided for. In love affairs, remorse does not last long, and the new sentiment is always there to drive away the old. With Constance, the young man was able to forget entirely the poor forest maiden, and in making new vows of love those he had sworn to another passed from his memory.

The marriage of the two young people could not be long delayed after the return of the Count of Montreville. Frederic desired it, Constance hoped for it, and the General wished it, because he did not think it best to let young lovers sigh too long.

Every one was agreed; what could delay the happiness of the lovers? The marriage day was chosen. The General decided to give a ball on the marriage of his niece, although he had never danced in his life. The Count wished to salute Constance by the sweet name of daughter as soon as possible, and the lovers, — ah! we know what they wished. It is not necessary to mention it.

Frederic was so much occupied with his approaching happiness that he was very seldom troubled with those memories which gave his features an expression of melancholy. If by chance a sigh escaped him, one glance from Constance dissipated immediately his memories of other days. Mademoiselle de Valmont was so lovable and the approach of happiness made her so beautiful that it was impossible not to adore her.

At last the day came which was to unite Frederic and Constance, and the Count of Montreville was so delighted that he allowed his son to invite anyone he pleased to his wedding. Frederic had no better friend than Dubourg, who, in spite of his follies, had given him proofs of a real attachment; besides which, since Dubourg had inherited a fortune he had become much more sensible. Of course he was always poor by the middle of the month, but he had not hypothecated his income, and he had replaced écarté for dominoes, a game on which much less money was lost.

Ménard was not forgotten; the good man loved Frederic tenderly, and although he had been a little too indulgent during their travels, the Count had pardoned all that, and, moreover, the tutor had always had the best intentions. As to his penchant for eating, in society this was often regarded as a merit.

Constance was dressed with taste and elegance, but her toilet was forgotten on seeing her grace and beauty, for happiness embellishes everything and can even add to the charms of a pretty face. The men could only admire her, but the women could see at a glance every detail of her costume and could tell you how every pin was placed, and how many folds there were, both in the back and front of her dress. Man's perception could never be so accurate as that.

Frederic was radiant with love; he did not let

Constance out of his sight, which was the surest way of avoiding unpleasant memories. Frederic also was very handsome, his face noble and calm, and if the men admired Constance there were plenty of women who would have liked to marry Frederic.

The General and the Count felt the most lively satisfaction in marrying their children. Monsieur de Valmont was more gay and expansive than the Count of Montreville, but the Count smiled on everybody, and for the first time embraced his son tenderly. Monsieur Ménard was dressed with great care, and he maintained a very severe manner until dinner was announced. As to Dubourg, he was delighted to be at his friend's wedding, and, wishing above all things to work himself into the good graces of the Count, he spent the day in trying to acquire a manner so severe that he looked as if he had a fit of the spleen, and bore himself with such dignity that one would have thought him a man of sixty years. Every time he saw the Count near him he began to talk of the deceitful pleasures of the world, of the happiness of retirement, and of the joys which await the just after death. This became so marked that the General said to Frederic, —

"What a devil of a fellow that Dubourg is! Does he pass all his time in cemeteries? I went up to him once or twice to gossip a bit, and he quoted five or six passages from Young's 'Night

Thoughts,' and from the 'Petit Carême' sermons of Massillon. That's a gay young man to invite to a wedding."

Frederic approached Dubourg and tried to persuade him to resume his usual manner, but Dubourg was convinced that his conversation and his air and manner just suited Monsieur de Montreville, and he would not make the least alteration.

A magnificent dinner was served in the Count's hotel, where the young people were to spend the evening, and then return to the General's house, where they were to live. The General travelled a great deal, and, having need of only a small suite of rooms, he gave up to the newly married people three-quarters of his mansion. Marriages in the best society are not so gay as middle-class weddings, an advantage which the middle class gains by not being admitted into the best society. But a sweet gayety presided over this dinner table. Monsieur Ménard ate as if he were at the table of M. Chambertin, but Dubourg did not eat at all. He refused almost every dish because he took it for granted that this was much more in good form. It was impossible to make him accept a glass of champagne or of liqueur. "I will take nothing," he replied with imperturbable composure.

The Count of Montreville looked at him with astonishment, while Ménard, who sat next him, said to him frequently,—

"But take something; I've seen you drink

often enough. Why don't you say at once that you are ill?"

"Your friend is terribly abstemious," said the General to Frederic. "You have invited an anchorite to meet us."

After the dinner, dancing occupied the evening. The newly married couple gave themselves up to this pleasure, always a delightful pastime, and surely the most charming way to end a wedding.

But Dubourg did not dance; he contented himself with walking through the salons in the stiffest possible manner, holding his head as if he had a ramrod down his back, and not pausing once before an écarté table.

"Don't you play, Monsieur Dubourg?" said the Count to him with a laughing air.

"No, monsieur; I have entirely given up playing for money. I love nothing but chess, the game for reasonable people, one of whom I have become."

"And you don't dance?"

"Never. I am fond of nothing but the minuet. That is a noble and stately dance, and it is a great pity that it is not danced nowadays."

"The devil, Monsieur Dubourg! You are much changed. You were formerly rather a giddy fellow."

"Yes, Monsieur le Comte; other times, other manners. We grow wise as we grow old."

"Old! But it is only a year ago that you played

Hippolyte, and induced that poor Ménard to play Theseus."

"Oh, monsieur, but since that time a great revolution has taken place in me. I love only study, science; ah, science especially; for, as Cato says, 'Sine doctrina vita est quasi mortis imago.'"

The Count, smiling, left Dubourg, who was satisfied that he had pleased him exceedingly. The day was ended; Ménard had returned to his little room, recalling in his memory all the delicate morsels that he had eaten. Dubourg was no sooner out of the hotel than he leaped and ran like a scholar who is just freed from the eyes of his master. Frederic and Constance were happy. They were alone at last, and no witnesses were present to constrain the expression of their tenderness. Society is wearisome to lovers, and they look forward with impatience to mystery and solitude. At last Frederic could lead his wife away. On the first day of his marriage a husband is a lover who carries off his mistress.

CHAPTER XI

Sister Anne Becomes a Mother. A Long Sojourn at the Farm

Sister Anne continued to dwell with the kind people at the farmhouse in which the Count had placed her, for we know now that the strange gentleman whose life she had so providentially saved by disclosing to him the danger to which he was exposed in the robber's cottage, was no other than Frederic's father, who was returning from a fruitless visit to Vizille where he had been to inquire into the circumstances and condition of the hapless girl whom Frederic — constrained by the Count's orders and his own habit of obedience — had abandoned against his will. The count had found no one in the cottage or in the wood, but the old shepherd, and the latter was entirely ignorant of the direction in which Sister Anne had turned her steps when she had deserted her cottage. In answer to all questions that were put to him, regarding the owner of the dwelling, he only said, —

"She has gone away, that's all I know. She wanted to go, and she went; and I don't know where she has gone."

On leaving the wood the Count had traversed all the neighborhood of Grenoble, and was returning from Lyons when his carriage was attacked in the forest.

In spite of her desire to continue her journey, Sister Anne knew very well that she was in no condition to travel; the time approached when she would become a mother, when she would hold in her arms the fruit of her love. This thought softened her torments a little; the hope of seeing her child made her forget her anguish, and in the farmhouse every one tried to comfort her and to bring a smile to her lips. The inhabitants of this dwelling were good people who felt the deepest interest in the young mute. Even without recompense they would have shown her the same attachment; but money is always a help, and the sum which the Count of Montreville gave them, when he asked them to take care of Sister Anne, was very considerable.

The young woman felt that she would do well to prolong her stay with these good people, and she offered them the purse of gold which the old gentleman had left with her a few moments before his departure, but the villagers would accept nothing more.

"Keep this money," said the farmer's wife to her. "Keep it, my child. This gentleman whom you saved from the brigands has provided for everything; he has paid us very well indeed. We

did not need that to make us wish to be kind to you, you are so sweet, so gentle, and so unhappy. Poor little thing! I can imagine in part your misfortune; some betrayer has taken advantage of your inexperience and your innocence,—he has deceived you and then left you. That is the history of all young girls who have no parents to warn them against the enticements of these fine gentlemen. Don't cry, my child; I'm not condemning you; you are less guilty than any other; your betrayer is the one who ought to be punished. To leave you in your afflicted state! Oh, he must have had a very hard heart."

When she heard these words Sister Anne made a quick movement to prevent the farmer's wife from saying any more. She put her finger on her lips, and shook her head positively, to deny what the villager had said.

"Never mind," said the farmer's wife; "she doesn't want us to say anything unkind of him; she loves him still. Well, that's the way with women; they are always ready to excuse the one who has done them the most harm. But don't worry about yourself, my child; stay with us, and we will cherish you like our own daughter; we will take very good care of you; here you will always be protected from misfortune."

Sister Anne pressed tenderly the hand of the farmer's wife, but her eyes would not make a promise which her heart had no intention of

keeping. Frederic always reigned in the depths of her burning heart, and the hope of finding him again never left the young girl.

A short time after the stranger's departure Sister Anne recalled that he had given her a paper. She took it from the purse in which she had put it, and showed it to the farmer's wife, impatient to know what it meant. The villager read, "The Count of Montreville, Rue de Provence, Paris." The paper contained nothing else. Sister Anne did not suspect that this was the name of Frederic's father, for he had never told her his family name; but she heard with joy that he lived in Paris. She tried to make her friend understand that this was the city to which she wanted to go, and she carefully replaced the paper in her purse.

"It is the stranger's address," said the farmer's wife. "Oh, he was a very unusual man. He is grateful; he will not forget the service that you have done him; I am sure that if you go to Paris he will receive you kindly; but what can you do in that great city? Believe me, dear girl, it is better to stay with us; you will be much happier."

Sister Anne was delighted to have this paper, upon which was the name of the city where she intended to go some day; with this little note she could make herself understood, and she gave thanks to Heaven for the circumstance which would enable her to find that Paris in which she hoped to discover her lover.

After she had been two months at the farm, Sister Anne brought into the world a little son. She looked at her child with a sort of intoxication; she was transported when she heard his first cries. Only a mother could understand the delight which this moment gave her. From the very first she believed that she could see a resemblance to Frederic in her little boy. She could not keep her eyes from him; she covered him with kisses; her little one should not leave her, and in spite of her feebleness she was determined to nurse him herself. The villagers did not oppose her wish, for there is no joy to a mother like that of nursing her own child, a constantly recurring delight, which Sister Anne seemed to feel even more deeply than others. She was so happy, so proud, when she held her infant to her breast, that joy made her forget her sorrows. Frederic did not fade from her memory, but her soul was no longer a prey to melancholy. The sight of her child often brought a smile to her lips; she felt that a mother could endure anything for her son.

Some weeks after her confinement Sister Anne declared that she wished to begin her travels, but the farm people warmly opposed her plan.

"What are you thinking of?" said the farmer's wife. "How can you travel when you are nursing your baby? It is no longer possible for you to think of yourself alone, but you must consider to what danger you are exposing his life. Believe

me, when you encounter new fatigues and perils, it can't but affect the nourishment that you give your child, and he draws his life from your breast. No, madame; it is impossible; your infant would soon lose his health and his life, if you persist in your plan."

Should she endanger the life of her son? This idea made the young mute tremble. She was willing to make any sacrifice for her little one, and although to delay her journey was a very great disappointment, after what the farmer's wife had said to her, she decided immediately to remain at the farm until her baby was weaned, when he would no longer suffer from the troubles and anxieties of his mother.

"Good, good; you will remain then," said the farmer's wife. She read in Sister Anne's eyes that she yielded.

"This is very well, my child; you are doing right. In a year, or in eighteen months, your son will be strong enough; then we will see; but until then you must not think of travelling."

Sister Anne had made her decision, and, though she still thought of Frederic, she busied herself entirely with her child. As a reward for her cares, she saw him each day gain new strength. His cheeks were brilliant with health; his lips were always parted with a sweet smile, and even now his little arms seemed to surround with special delight the neck of her who had given him life.

Sister Anne had written the name of Frederic for the villagers, to show them that she wished her little boy to be given this name, and they already called the child nothing else, the young mother experiencing a new pleasure each time that this name struck her ear. How happy she would be when her little child recognized it and responded to it!

The young mute had been with the good farm people for six months, when one day a courier brought to the farm a package containing twenty-five louis, and a note from the Count of Montreville addressed to the farmer's wife. In his letter he asked them again to take special care of the young woman, and promised that if they did so he would send them an equal sum every six months.

The farmer's wife hastened to tell Sister Anne of this new kindness of the Count of Montreville, and the eyes of the young mother overflowed with tears of gratitude.

"What a good man he is!" said the villager. "Oh, I was sure he would not forget you. I repeat to you, if you go to Paris later on the Count will take every care of you. Gracious, child, he is a count, and that means a nobleman, a rich and powerful man. He must be very rich, and if your betrayer is in Paris he will look him up, I am sure; and perhaps, with his influence and good advice, he will make him stay with you."

Sister Anne showed that she agreed with the farmer's wife, and that she would follow her advice, and insisted that the good woman should accept the money which the Count had sent, feeling very happy to think that these good people had lost nothing by their kindness to her.

The time rolled on. Sister Anne idolized her son. He filled the place of all that she had lost. She saw in him the brother whom she had loved so dearly, and whose death had caused her such a fearful shock. She saw Frederic in him, for the child bore a great resemblance to his father. She studied the slightest wishes of her child; she watched his look, his smile; and in those touching cares prompted by her mother-love, which occupied her days and nights, the time did not seem too long until she could begin that journey in which she should find her lover again, and perhaps be reunited to him forever.

Little Frederic promised to have the beauty and sweetness of his mother. Already he could lisp her name,—the name so sweet to a mother's ear; and Sister Anne felt how necessary it was that she should not deprive her child of the comfort and care which every one lavished upon him in the farmhouse. If her child had known only her, he would not have been able to speak, for the use of the voice in speech is an art which one cannot gain without a master.

The Count sent a second sum of money at the

time promised. His messenger asked carefully as to the condition of the young mute and the health of the baby, and advised Sister Anne not to leave the farm, where she enjoyed a tranquil and happy life, and where she could take the best of care of her son.

But Sister Anne could not give up her desire to go to Paris. In spite of the remonstrances of the farmer's wife, she still wished to try to find Frederic. The love she felt for her son did not diminish her regret at being separated from her lover; on the contrary, when she looked at her boy and admired his beauty, she felt the keenest longing to show him to his father. If he should see him, she thought, could he help loving him? "No, he would never afterward consent to be separated from me."

Little Frederic was twenty months old, and had been weaned for some time. He began to take his first steps, and each day his walk was less wavering. Sister Anne guided him, supported him, watched the development of his strength and of his faculties. A mother sees each day with delight the changes in her child, just as a gardener watches the growth, even in a single night, of the plants that are committed to his care.

She had no reason to be anxious for the health of her son, and the money which the Count had given her relieved her anxiety as to the expense of her journey. Not doubting that as soon as

she arrived in Paris she would find in the Count a protector and friend, Sister Anne resolved to undertake her journey, and one morning showed the farmer's wife the paper bearing the Count's address, which was her way of announcing that she wished to go.

The farm people did their best to persuade her to change her resolution, but this time Sister Anne was immovable. She had determined to go,—she must go to Paris. Her heart told her that she would find Frederic there.

"Why do you take your child?" said the farmer's wife to her. "Leave him with us; you know how much we love him."

Sister Anne, who could not understand how a mother could be separated from her child a single moment, pressed the boy against her breast, and signed that she would never leave him.

"Well, anyway," said the farmer's wife, "if you are determined to go to Paris, you shall not go on foot like a beggar. I will take you to Lyons in my chaise, then I will put you in a diligence, which will take you and your child to your destination. When you arrive there, all you need to do is to show the address that you have, and they will take you to the house of M. de Montreville, who will not abandon you, and when you wish to return to us he will provide you with the means."

Sister Anne showed the good farmer's wife all the gratitude that her kindness would naturally

call forth. The journey was decided upon, and they were all busy with the necessary preparations, her friends providing the young woman with underwear, clothing, and everything that she needed for herself and her child. They offered her money also, but Sister Anne's purse contained fifty louis, which seemed an enormous sum, and much more than enough to live on in Paris, even if the Count of Montreville did not provide for her there. She wished nothing more, her clothes being to her magnificent in comparison with those she had worn in the wood. Her heart swelled with joy when she looked at her simple and tasteful dress, which was that of a young farmer's wife of Dauphiny. "He will find me very beautiful," she said, "and I am sure he will love me more than ever."

The preparations were finished at last. Her kind friend harnessed the horse to the chaise, and got in with Sister Anne, who held her little boy upon her knees. They started at dawn, arriving at Lyons the same evening. The farmer's wife secured a place for the young mother in a diligence which started the next morning for Paris, putting her in charge of the guard, so that he would watch over her during the journey.

The moment for departure arrived. Many tears were shed when the good woman said farewell to the young mute and to little Frederic.

"You wanted to leave us, my child," she said

to Sister Anne; "I'm afraid you have done wrong. You are going to an immense city; the people will not be so kind as they are in our village, but don't forget us. Let us hear news of you through Monsieur de Montreville, who seems to love you greatly; but if some day you are unhappy, ah! come back quickly to us, dear child; we shall always be glad to see you and your baby."

Sister Anne embraced the kind woman tenderly, and then with her little boy entered the vehicle which was to take her to Paris.

CHAPTER XII

The Diligence. Sister Anne in Paris

A young woman who up to the age of sixteen has never left her cottage home, and by reason of her peculiar affliction is a stranger to the world and its usages must necessarily experience a thousand new sensations — whether pleasurable or otherwise — when she sees herself for the first time surrounded by strange people in one of those caravans in which travellers make the journey between city and country.

Such was Sister Anne's situation. She was barely eighteen and a half years of age when she left the farmhouse to venture to Paris with her little son, who was then a year and nine months old. Seated in the back of the carriage and holding her baby on her knees, she dared not raise her eyes to all these unknown persons who were travelling with her, and blushed vividly whenever she perceived that any of them were looking at her.

Her extreme youth, her beauty and modesty, and the sweet motherly affection which she manifested for her charming little son were more than sufficient to render her interesting in the eyes

of every person of refinement; but you do not find much refinement in a diligence, and the people who surrounded Sister Anne seemed especially lacking in it. At her left was a merchant who talked constantly of his business with a broker sitting opposite him. The ups and downs of the board of trade, the price of sugar, of coffee, and of cochineal, the business at the recent fairs, so occupied these gentlemen that they did not have time to ask their neighbors' pardon when they thrust their elbows into them by mistake, or stuck their snuffboxes under the wrong nose. At the right of the young mother was a man about forty years of age. He had a pair of furtive eyes which never looked you straight in the face. His manner was dry and cold; he spoke little, but seemed to be watching and studying his neighbors. Opposite her was a lady of fifty years. She wore a soiled silk dress and a very old velvet hat, and upon this waved some plumes which bore a great resemblance to sticks. Her face was inflamed and overloaded with rouge, with patches and with snuff. Before the carriage had been going ten minutes, this lady had told the passengers that she had played the ingénues at Strasbourg, the princesses at Caen, the young lovers at Saint-Malo, the shepherdesses at Quimper, the queens at Nantes, noble mothers at Noisy-le-Sec, and the first ladies at Troyes. She intended to play the great coquettes at the Fun-

ambules in Paris, where she counted on shortly obtaining an ordre de début for the Comédie-Française, an honor she had been soliciting for thirty-six years.

Finally, next the débutante was a fat gentleman who slept almost constantly, only wakening to cry out, "Halloo! we're going to fall. I thought we were tipping over." He was a delightful neighbor to have in a diligence!

During the first moments of the journey, Sister Anne heard nothing but a confused noise, mingled with words which she could not comprehend. The indigo and the cochineal of the merchants were not to be distinguished from the adventures of the great coquette, and the actress constantly cried to her sleepy neighbor, —

"Take care, monsieur; you'll throw yourself upon me. Have a little regard for my sex."

"Oh, yes; I thought we were falling," said the fat gentleman again, rubbing his eyes.

Everyone attended to his own comfort first, and then began to study his neighbors. The gentleman with the bad eyes began by complimenting Anne on the beauty of her son, and this called a sweet smile to the face of the young mute, for you are sure to please a mother when you praise her child.

The lady with the old hat studied Sister Anne in her turn, and said, "She really does very well, this little lady; she has an interesting face; that's

exactly the costume I wore in 'Annette et Lubin,' in 1792. It was very becoming to me. I must play this rôle again at the Funambules."

The two merchants glanced at Sister Anne, and as the little Frederic had a bit of sugar in his hands this suggested necessarily the latest variations in the sugar market.

"The child is very pretty," said the actress. "He already has a great deal of expression in his features. If he was mine I would put him on the stage; in a year he could play the little Joas in 'Athalie,' and in two more he would have great success in Punchinello. Oh, that's the way they educate children nowadays. That is superb. Nobody could resist such an education; and at twelve he could be playing Forioso."

Sister Anne had never heard of Forioso and the little Joas, but she saw that her baby was admired, and her heart swelled with that sentiment of pleasure and pride so natural in a young mother. Presently, however, she realized that questions were addressed to her.

"You are going to Paris," said the actress. "Are you taking him to be vaccinated, or have you already had it done at home? What are you going to do in Paris? Has you husband gone on in advance?"

The lady, receiving no answer to all these questions, began to think the conduct of the young mother very insolent.

"Can't you hear me, madame?" she went on again, in an ironical tone. "When I talk to you it seems as if you might do me the honor to answer me."

Sister Anne shook her head and lowered her eyes sorrowfully.

"Well, what do you mean by that?" cried the old débutante. "I believe she dares to say that she doesn't want to talk to me. Please understand, little upstart, that it is an honor to talk to me, and that Primrose Bérénice de Follencourt is not one to endure an insult. I've had a fight more than once on the stage. I've played a man's rôles, and I've drawn the sword. Do you understand, Miss Impertinence?"

Sister Anne was frightened at the old lady's tone, and at the wrath which sparkled in her eyes. She glanced supplicatingly at her neighbor on the right; he had been watching her with much curiosity, and he said to the actress,—

"Madame, I think you are wrong to be angry."

"I should like to know how I can be wrong?"

"The silence of this young woman is undoubtedly not natural. I have not heard her speak a single word since we entered the carriage, not even to her baby. I believe that she is a mute."

"A mute! A dumb woman! That is impossible, monsieur."

But Sister Anne hastened to indicate that this was true, and immediately the old actress uttered

a cry of astonishment so loud that it wakened her fat neighbor.

"She is mute? Is it possible, monsieur? Do you understand she is mute?"

"Oh! oh!" cried the sleepy neighbor. "I thought we were tipping over."

"Oh, you are a perfectly unendurable man! You will give me hysterics with your continual upsets. — Poor angel! dear little thing! You are a mute, my sweet friend? Oh, how sorry I am for you! How you must suffer! I would rather be blind or deaf. Poor little thing! She's so interesting, such grace; and she can't talk. And how long since this happened, dear child?"

Sister Anne was as much astonished at the friendship which the old comedian showed as she had been at her anger. She drew her purse from her bosom, took from it the paper which she always carried in it, and showed it to her neighbor, who read it in a low voice and contented himself by saying, —

"It is the address of the house where she is going."

"Oh, I suppose she's going to be a nurse in this place. She'd do much better if she played in pantomime. What a pretty head! She would do beautifully in 'Philoméle et Térée.'"

Sister Anne's neighbor made no response to the old actress. He seemed greatly preoccupied since his glimpse of the purse of gold which the

young mother had drawn from her bosom, to get the address of the Count. From this moment he redoubled his attentions and cares for Sister Anne. He caressed the little Frederic, and carried his gallantry so far as to buy him a piece of barley sugar and some spice cakes at the first station. Sister Anne, whose pure and simple heart saw only friends and protectors in every one, did not notice the dishonesty and falseness which were evident in the glance of her neighbor. On the contrary, she felt every confidence in him. Poor little thing! What will become of you in Paris?

The second day of the journey, the gentleman with the sly glance said to Sister Anne, "I am very well acquainted in Paris with the Count of Montreville, and go often to see him. He is one of my friends. If you wish it I will take you to him myself."

The young mute nodded gladly, to indicate that she accepted this offer with gratitude; and the old actress, noticing that Sister Anne smiled at her neighbor, compressed her lips and looked at her with a disdainful air; then she murmured between her teeth, "Those are pretty manners! To make acquaintances in a travelling carriage!" There are some people who are always looking for evil, especially when they have done wicked things all their lives. As to Sister Anne, she gazed at the comedian with astonishment. She could not understand how a woman, in less than twenty-

four hours, could feel for her anger, friendship and disdain.

At last the diligence entered the great city. Sister Anne was astonished and terrified at all she saw, and believed herself in a new world. She had reached Lyons in the evening, and had left it in the early morning, so she had not seen that city, of which the grandeur, the wealth and the population would have prepared her somewhat for Paris.

The gentleman with the sly glance did not lessen his tender care for the young mute and her son; he helped them out of the diligence. The great coquette of the Funambules rearranged her hat, for the plumes had become a little crumpled in the carriage. The two merchants ran to the board of trade, and the fat gentleman went off, saying, "Good! we didn't upset. That's queer; I thought we were going to upset every minute." While all this was going on, the obliging gentleman called a cab, and, having placed Sister Anne in it with her bundle, he seated himself beside her.

The unknown spoke to the coachman. He said to the young traveller, "We will stop first at the house of the Count of Montreville. I am enchanted to take you myself to his mansion. You are a stranger in Paris, and you would have been very much embarrassed, because you cannot speak."

Sister Anne thanked the gentleman. The poor

little thing never dreamed that she had fallen into the hands of a confidence man, of a wretched criminal, who had played his tricks in most of the larger cities, and had been forced to flee from them, and who came to Paris, hoping that an absence of eight years had enabled his old victims to forget him, and that he would find plenty of new ones. It was impossible that the young mute should not fall into the first snare that was laid for her; sweet and confiding, and a stranger to deceit, she looked for evil in no one. Her adventure in the forest had taught her to be afraid of thieves in a wood, but she never dreamed of suspecting those whom she would encounter in the city, whom it is much more difficult to recognize, because they are always covered with a mask of honesty. This makes them more dangerous than those who attack us on the open road. The cab in which the travellers were riding stopped before a beautiful residence. The gentleman hastened to descend, and said to Sister Anne, "Wait for me a moment. This is the Count's house, but I will see if he is there now." Presently he entered the house, but he returned in a few minutes looking somewhat annoyed.

"My dear lady, I was afraid of the very thing that has happened. The Count of Montreville is in the country. He will not return for two days."

The young girl's face seemed to say, "What

shall I do during that time? Where shall I go?" "Don't be anxious," continued this very obliging young man; "I don't wish to leave you in embarrassment; I'm going to take you to an honest house, where they will look after you. Two days are soon past, and then you can return to the Count's house."

Sister Anne again expressed her gratitude, touched by all this kindness, although she was not surprised at it; she believed that every one was kind in the great cities. The cab went on. The movement of the carriage pleased little Frederic; he laughed, he jumped upon his mother's knees, and she herself was astonished and delighted as she looked out at the stately houses, at the shops, and at all this crowd of people. "Oh, you will see much more than this," said the gentleman. "You will be surprised in a thousand different ways; this journey will teach you a great deal."

The cab stopped before a shabby-looking private hotel in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques. Sister Anne entered it and discovered that if it were an honest place it was a very unattractive and dirty one; but she followed the gentleman, who carried her bundle into a chamber which had been assigned to her, and who stopped to say to Sister Anne alone,—

"Before leaving you, I must tell you that there is a little formality to fulfil; when you take a

room in a hotel in Paris, you are obliged to tell what money you have with you. The police ask this information, so that if anyone loses money in the city it will be more easily found. If you declare today that you have forty louis, and tomorrow it is stolen from you, they count the purses of all the people in the city, and he who has too much is the thief. Ho! what do you think of that? That's pretty clever — isn't it?"

Sister Anne did not understand all that the gentleman meant; she looked at him for a clearer explanation, and he added, "You must count your money for the mistress of the house. Will you do it, or shall I do it for you? That would be better. Give me your purse, and the trouble will soon be over."

The poor little girl drew her purse from her bosom, and the obliging gentleman took it. He said, "Don't be impatient. I'll go and count what is in here." Then he went out. He gave a piece of gold to the mistress of the house, saying to her, "That is to pay the expenses of this young woman, who is a mute." After that the scoundrel hurried away, flattering himself that he had shown great finesse, and went to the Palais-Royal, where, finding other scoundrels of his own kind, he soon lost what he had stolen from the unfortunate mute. While looking for more dupes whose purses he could take, he filched one from the pocket of a wealthy Englishman; but this

milord, having seen him, had the rascal arrested. He was taken to the Préfecture, then to the Bicêtre, and at last to the galleys, where he even tried to steal from his comrades; — but we will leave him there.

Sister Anne waited in vain for the return of the kind gentleman who had gone out with her purse. The poor little thing had no suspicion. She was not at all uneasy, and played quietly with her little boy, occasionally looking out of the window, and then turning away terrified, because the chamber was on the third floor, and the young mute had never found herself so high above the passers-by.

However, the gentleman did not return, and Sister Anne was beginning to feel surprised at his long absence, when the mistress of the house came in search of her.

The young mother extended her hand to take the purse, but the landlady merely asked her what she would have. "I shall take great care of you," she added, "for the gentleman paid for your lodging and all expenses before he went away; he said you would stay two days with me, and that I should give you all you needed."

The gentleman had gone away. A frightful presentiment suddenly illuminated the mind of Sister Anne. She tried to make herself understood; she held out her hand and made signs as if she were counting money, but the landlady did not comprehend. "I tell you that I have been paid," she

declared. "I ask nothing from you, my child, and I came to tell you dinner is ready."

Sister Anne was completely overcome. It was not only her money that she regretted, but in her purse was the address of the Count of Montreville, and the miserable wretch had carried away that with all that she possessed. What would become of her? How should she now be able to find the house of her protector?

During the day the young girl still preserved some hope. She tried to think that the unknown would return, but night fell and the obliging man had not reappeared. Sister Anne shed bitter tears as she pressed her son to her heart. She no longer could suffer alone, and this knowledge made her pain all the more keen. Already she saw her child deprived of the necessaries of life; she saw him in need of food; she trembled; she realized all the horror of her situation, and she repented deeply that she had left the farm, for the thought of her child's suffering deprived her of all her courage.

She passed in her room the second day of her stay in Paris. The wretch who had despoiled her had told her that the Count would be away two days; so she waited until the next day to look for M. de Montreville. She hoped that she might recognize the house before which the cab had stopped. The poor little thing believed that she could find it a second time in this immense city. She did not suspect that the scoundrel who had

stolen her purse had stopped the carriage before a hotel which was not that of the Count.

The next day she took her son upon one arm and the package containing her effects on the other, and so left the house, the landlady making no effort to keep her, because her expenses had only been paid for two days. Sister Anne put herself in the hands of Providence, and tried to recall her courage, as she wandered through the streets of the strange city, where she was unknown. Every instant the carriages terrified her, the horses filled her with fear, the cries of the street hucksters deafened her. The sight of this mass of people coming and going, and pushing rudely against her, troubled her so that she almost lost consciousness. The poor little thing sat down under a gateway and began to cry. The portress of the house asked her the cause of her sorrow, but she could only cry the harder; then the portress went away in a bad humor, saying, "There is no use in pitying people who will not tell you what is the matter with them."

After the young girl had wept for a long time, she set out again on her way; but she walked for four hours without accomplishing anything; she saw still streets and shops, and not knowing which way to take often went for a long distance, only to come back again to the place whence she had started. And how should she recognize the Count's house? She realized that it would be im-

possible for her to identify it. Soon she began to have wants which increased the horror of the situation.

She seated herself upon a stone bench. People passing by threw her a glance, but continued on their way; they would have stopped if, instead of a woman weeping over her child, they had seen a cat fighting with punchinello.

Fortunately, it was in the middle of summer, and the coming of night did not prevent her from wandering farther. The young mute entered a pastrycook's shop and gave her child some cakes; then she sadly offered one of her garments in payment. This, however, was returned to her, with a glance of pity and surprise; for Sister Anne's appearance did not indicate misery, and no one would have supposed her to be without money.

She tried to start on her way again, but the night increased her fears; and, in spite of the lamps which lighted the streets, the noise of horses and vehicles seemed to her still more terrifying than before. She trembled each moment with the fear of being run over with her child by the carriages which passed her on all sides. Again she seated herself on a bench.

Sister Anne was then on Rue Montmartre; several times during the day she had passed Rue de Provence, and had seen the house of M. de Montreville, but the poor little thing had not recognized it. She saw it was now impossible to

find his residence again; she was almost ready to give up to despair, but she pressed her son to her heart, covered him with kisses, and endeavored to collect her strength. The little fellow smiled and played with her hair. He was at the age when a child knows no misfortune so long as it is in its mother's arms.

The evening wore on; the passers-by were less numerous; the carriages succeeded each other at longer intervals; the shops had long since closed. Sister Anne lifted her eyes and looked about her with more assurance. Where should she seek a shelter for the night? She was lost in the midst of dwelling-places. She dared not accost a single human being. Her pleading glance rested on the people who passed her; sometimes a man would pause to look at her. "She is pretty!" he would remark, but when she presented her child he left as quickly as possible.

"Good God!" thought the unfortunate woman, "the people of Paris don't love children! They run away as soon as I show them my child."

About midnight a company of soldiers passed along the street; she trembled as they approached her, and one of them, advancing to her, said, "Go, go on. What are you doing there with your child? Go home, or we'll take you there with a guard."

The harsh tone of the man who had just spoken made her shrink. She rose quickly and hastened away, pressing her child in her arms;

but she had scarcely gone a hundred steps, when she remembered that she had left her little bundle on the stone bench, and it contained all her possessions. She ran to get it as fast as possible, and found the place where she had been seated, without any difficulty; but, alas, her bundle was gone! Unhappy creature! This was her last resource.

She could not weep at this added misfortune; an enormous weight seemed fastened upon her breast. As she went on with her child she dared not even think, but walked quickly without noticing where she went, and folded her arms about her boy with a new strength, although all her limbs were quivering with a nervous convulsion; she had almost lost her consciousness of the evils she endured. She descended Rue Montmartre; she reached the boulevard; suddenly she saw trees, and her heart swelled with joy, — the poor little girl believed she had reached the end of the city where this evil fate pursued her. She thought she was to find the fields once more, and the woods. She ran quickly toward the first tree she could see, and pressed herself against it; she touched it in a sort of intoxication, and then her tears burst forth.

She seated herself under this foliage, the sight of which had restored her courage, covered the baby with the apron she wore, and decided to wait here for the dawn.

Day returned before the young mute had

known a moment of sleep. She thought of the future which awaited her; she saw that she must ask public charity for herself and her child. If she had been alone, she would have waited death gladly; but she had her child, and she must struggle on for his sake. After their life at the farm, surrounded by every comfort, and with people who loved and cherished her little boy, how could she endure to beg her bread? It seemed to her she could never forgive herself for having left that sweet and quiet home. She blamed herself most when she looked at her boy. "Poor little one!" she thought to herself; "my selfishness has caused you all this trouble; but was I so wrong when I wished to bring you to your father? Oh, if I could return to that dear shelter; if I could see once more those good villagers who treated me like their own daughter! I must give up the hope of finding Frederic! If my sorrow deprives me of life, what will become of my boy in this immense city?"

The poor mother wept as she gazed at the little Frederic, who was still sleeping. Some peasants came by, on the way to market, and offered them some bread and some fruit; a milk-seller gave them milk to drink, and was especially pleased with the baby. All hearts are not so hard. Even the Parisians give gladly to the poor, although they often will not pause to hear a tale of suffering because they fear to be disturbed in

their own pleasures by the sight of the unfortunate.

During part of the day Sister Anne walked back and forth through the city, endeavoring to find the residence of her protector. Often she passed men who had the figure and the dress of Frederic; then she quickened her steps, she hastened to approach them, and as soon as she was near them she saw her error. Some regarded her in astonishment, and others smiled at her impertinently. She withdrew, quite ashamed and broken-hearted. "My God!" she said to herself, "shall I ever find him?"

Toward the close of the day, the provisions which had been given her in the morning were exhausted. She must hold out her hand, and arouse the pity of the passers-by. Sister Anne was obliged to look at her boy before she could gather courage to beg for bread. If at least those who do good would give kindly, the unfortunate would have less to complain of; but there is a harsh or disdainful air, that is nearly an insult, with which a great many people aid the unfortunate. "Alas!" thought Sister Anne, as her tears dropped, "is it a crime for me to be poor?"

She longed to leave Paris. The country people seemed to her more sympathetic, more gentle; with them she would not be so ashamed of her poverty; but what road could she take to find the hospitable farm once more? She could only

put herself again into God's hands. He had always answered her prayers. Poor little thing! Only he can guide you to the end of your sorrows.

She did not know what road she should take, but her first thought was to leave the city, so she decided to follow a man who walked beside a little canvas-covered wagon. In reality the man was not long in reaching a suburb, and he very soon passed beyond the limits of the city. She followed always behind the little wagon, and as it went at a slow pace the young mother had no difficulty in reaching the country. She breathed more freely, she embraced her son, and, begging for him the kind support of Heaven, she directed her steps toward a village, to ask for help there.

CHAPTER XIII

The Fateful Meeting

Frederic still loved his wife, perhaps less ardently, less rapturously than during the first six months of their union; but the constant companionship of man and wife had not extinguished his affection. How should it when each day he discovered in Constance new qualities, new virtues to admire and respect.

Beauty of face entrances, but it does not always enchain; beauty of mind and of character are necessary to ensure a lifelong affection, and happy is the husband who finds in his wife those attractions which time can neither diminish nor destroy.

Constance showed herself susceptible to one fault only. A feeling that is cruel in its effects upon the one who possesses it when its unfortunate owner does not know how to master it; but the young wife concealed it carefully in the depths of her heart: she was very jealous; the excess of her love for Frederic often made her a prey to secret fears as to whether she truly possessed his whole heart. Whenever he became dreamy and thoughtful, as it must be admitted he often did,

Constance became anxious, and a thousand fancies rose in her mind. What could trouble her husband? What caused him to sigh, and threw a melancholy shadow upon his face? He undoubtedly sighed at times. Before their marriage she attributed to his love for her the melancholy which rested upon the brow of Frederic; but, now that they were united, now that nothing could come between them, and nothing could repress their tenderness or trouble their happiness, why should Frederic sigh? Why should he sometimes be lost in dreams? Constance asked herself these questions; but the unselfish woman was very careful not to trouble her husband with them. It would have broken her heart to let him have the slightest suspicion of her anxieties. She would not torment her husband with her jealousy; she was resolved upon that. She would always be sweet, tender, and loving, and if she suffered she would conceal it carefully, because she would not annoy the one whom she loved better than life.

The death of the General threw a cloud upon their happiness at the close of the year. Monsieur Valmont was loved by all about him, and tenderly cherished by his niece, with whom he had held the place of a father. Nothing but the love of her husband could have softened the sorrow of Constance, so deeply was she affected by her uncle's death. Monsieur de Montreville mingled his regrets with her tears; he had lost a true friend;

but in old age we show more courage in the loss of those we love than we do when we are in the springtime of life. Is it because age increases our egotism? or is it because the heart which has become less sensitive to the ecstasy of love will not yield to the transports of friendship? or is it not rather the idea that the separation cannot be for long, because we shall soon rejoin those whom we have lost?

Constance was the sole heir of her uncle; the General was very wealthy, and he owned several farms and estates, which Frederic had never seen. He had planned to make a little tour, and visit his new possessions, and Constance was to remain in Paris, so that M. de Montreville should not be left alone. They feared he would grow melancholy over the loss of his friend; but how could Frederic leave his wife until her sorrow had become less intense? The journey was not at all pressing, and Frederic put it off from month to month; while Constance, who had not left her husband a single day since their marriage, could not decide to let him go.

Some time after the death of the General, Frederic learned that M. Ménard suffered greatly from gout, had no pupils, and was in anything but a fortunate condition; so he visited his old tutor, and invited him to come and make his home with him.

"I need," he said to him, "a man who is wise,

skilful, and will take an interest in my affairs. I need such a one to keep an eye on my accounts, and on my stewards, and to carry on the correspondence with them. Dear Ménard, you are this very man. Please understand that you do not come to us as an overseer, but as a dear friend, whom I like to have with me. If Heaven should give me children, you will educate them as you have educated their father."

Ménard accepted this offer with gratitude, and he was soon installed with Frederic, and Constance showed him every kindness and attention. She loved the old tutor, because he was so fond of her husband. Ménard, deeply touched by the attentions which the young wife lavished upon him, often said to her, kissing her hand with respect, —

"Oh, madame, you must have children; I will be their tutor, and they will be as sweet and handsome as monsieur your husband, and he is the pupil who brought me my greatest honor."

Constance smiled at this; probably she would have liked nothing better herself, but we cannot always have the desire of our hearts.

Dubourg had not abandoned his friend. Frederic said to him, "Come to me whenever you please. We will always keep a room for you," and Dubourg profited by this invitation, not to live with Frederic in Paris, but to visit sometimes his country house. One usually saw Dubourg toward the last half of the quarter, for he received

his income quarterly; but he never could make it last more than half of the allotted time. When it was exhausted he began to dine with Frederic, if he was in Paris, or took a little tour in the country, saying, —

"Thanks to you, good friend, I live as if I had double my sixteen hundred livres of income. I spend my revenue in six months, and the rest of the time you make up my expenses."

The gay character of Dubourg pleased Constance, and Frederic was always glad to see his friend; for he knew that, though he had been a gay fellow, his wife would never hear a word from him which was not perfectly respectful, and that he would always regard her as sacredly as if she were his sister. One can forgive serious faults in those who respect friendship. There are many people sincere, virtuous, and of fine feeling, but they seem to take pleasure in putting the houses of their friends in an uproar.

When Dubourg and Ménard were united at Frederic's home, and this was often the case at the end of the quarter, the old tutor never failed to sing the praises of the household which was so constantly under his eyes.

"They are Orpheus and Eurydice; they are Deucalion and Pyrrha; they are Philemon and Baucis; they are Pyramus and Thisbe," he exclaimed.

"O Heavens!" said Dubourg, "Frederic has a

charming wife, a woman who has every good quality, an endless treasure. He would be the very devil if he were not contented."

"No doubt that's true, but if I had not taught my pupil excellent principles of wisdom and morality, perhaps he would not be so well behaved, even if he loves his wife. There was the Czar Peter the Great; he adored Catherine, but that did not prevent his having many mistresses. There have been numberless princes who had very bad morals; and I have known excellent husbands, who behave most improperly upon occasion."

"Dear Monsieur Ménard, don't boast too much of Frederic's wisdom; if he only had you as guide—"

"You would perhaps have been a better one. That was an example of it when you pretended to be the Baron Potoski."

"Never mind; hush, Monsieur Ménard; we'll forget that journey. We were neither of us as wise as we might have been. I hope you have never mentioned this matter to Madame de Montreville. Do not speak, especially, of that little adventure in the wood, of Frederic's passion for—"

"Oh, what do you take me for? I know how awkward that would be, non est hic locus, and Madame de Montreville might be much hurt at such a story. Of course it all happened before her marriage. She has too much tolerance and generosity to blame her husband for his boyish follies."

"But, in spite of her generosity, there are some things a woman does not hear with pleasure. It is always best to avoid saying anything which would make her think that another at any time possessed her husband's heart. Though a woman knows that a young man must have been in love before she married him, she always believes that he never loved anyone so much, and it hurts her very much to realize that he may have experienced as vivid a sentiment for another as for herself."

"I understand that very well. It is like the cook; you must always tell him that you never ate such good macaroni."

"That's it exactly. Your comparisons are astonishingly accurate; besides, I think this young woman could be very jealous; she's terribly in love with her husband."

"Well, I don't know but you're right. I noticed one day that she was not quite so gay as usual. I suppose it was because her husband amused himself for a quarter of an hour caressing the cat."

"Oh, the devil take you with your cats! How can you suspect Constance of such foolishness?"

"I don't see why that's foolish; there are many men who prefer a dog to their wife, just as there are women who love a canary better than their husband. Of course my pupil is not one of that kind; but—"

"Has Madame de Montreville ever asked you if you knew the cause of Frederic's melancholy, of his abstraction?"

"Why, yes; I remember she asked me one evening very privately, 'Do you know what makes Frederic sigh so much? Can you imagine what causes it?'"

"And what did you tell her?"

"Why, zounds! I said to her, 'Madame, he has undoubtedly a bad digestion, and that interferes with his breathing. It is often so with me.' Since that time she has never questioned me on this subject."

"I'm quite sure of that."

Frederic might be happy; but he had not forgotten the little mute of the wood, and sometimes the memory of her threw him into a profound reverie. He wished to know the fate of Sister Anne; but he did not dare speak of it to his father. The Count had promised him that he would watch over her, and Frederic knew that he could trust absolutely in his father's word; but he wanted to know where she was, what she did. He wondered if she still loved him. The ungrateful fellow did not doubt it, though he had been so unfaithful himself. His love for Constance became constantly more calm and peaceable, and in these days the memory of Sister Anne recurred continually to his mind. A smile, a caress from his wife would immediately make him forget the

young mute; but a little later her image returned once more. It seems as if the heart of a man always needed memories or hopes.

Frederic had been married to Constance for two years. Their only sorrow was that they had no child. Frederic wished for a son; Constance longed to offer her husband a proof of her love, and M. Ménard ardently desired the arrival of little pupils.

The Count of Montreville did not live with his children, but he often visited them. He still kept the servant who had accompanied him when he was attacked in the forest, and whom he had forbidden to speak of this adventure. But one evening when he was gossiping with the people in the office, the valet forgot his master's command, and as each one present related a story of an encounter with thieves, he felt that he must do his part; so he told of the perils he had shared with the Count, and how his master had been saved as by a miracle, through the cleverness of a young woman who was mute. Frederic's servant was present when this story was told, and the next morning, when dressing his master, he asked him if Dumont's story was true, because he considered Dumont a liar. He had never heard that the Count had been attacked by thieves, or had been saved by a young mute woman.

These last words attracted Frederic's attention; a secret presentiment warned him that they

referred to Sister Anne. He said nothing to his valet, but hastened to his father's hotel. The Count was absent, but Dumont was there; Frederic could speak to him alone, and this was just what he wanted. At the first questions Dumont blushed. He recalled the Count's command, which he had forgotten; but it was no longer possible for him to be silent. Besides, he did not think it would do any harm to speak of this matter to his master's son. He could not understand why the Count had made such a mystery of this adventure.

The story of the young girl whom his father had taken to the farm made a vivid impression upon Frederic. From the first word he did not doubt that it all related to Sister Anne. He demanded a thousand details of Dumont, and the servant told him all that he knew.

"Do you think she remained at the farm?" asked Frederic.

"Oh, yes, monsieur. She was too delicate to continue her journey; and then, I forgot to tell you, she was about to become a mother."

"What are you saying, Dumont? This young girl —"

"Girl or woman — I know nothing about that; but I tell you she must have had that hope."

Sister Anne had had a child! Frederic understood now why his father had made a mystery of the whole affair. He inquired exactly the name

of the village, and the locality of the farm in which the young mute had been left. Then he gave Dumont a purse of money. He warned him, in his turn, to keep secret the story of this adventure, and not to mention their conversation; and Dumont promised to say nothing, although he wondered greatly over this conduct of the father and son.

As soon as Frederic knew that Sister Anne had made him a father, he had not one moment's peace. The idea pursued him constantly; he was eager to see his child. His reveries became more frequent; his brow was often clouded, and Constance heard him sigh. The young wife did not dare to question her husband, but she suffered and tormented herself in secret. She wished to be the sole possessor of Frederic's thoughts, to fill his soul; but she herself was near him; she pressed his hand in hers; so she could not be the cause of his sighs.

When she could not restrain the question, and asked Frederic what was the matter, he collected himself; he pressed her to his heart, and said to her, "What else can I wish, when I always have you?" But even then Constance found something in his smile, something melancholy and dreamy, which did not seem to her entirely happy.

Frederic said to his wife that he must begin this journey which he had talked of so long; he could not delay longer. Constance had thought that

Ménard would be his companion, and take her place, for Frederic had mentioned this plan; but he had changed his mind, and now decided to go alone, and she dared not try to keep him, nor propose to accompany him. She feared to seem distrustful or importunate, or to offend him in any way; and besides, if Frederic had wished her to go with him, he only needed to hint such a thing; she would have left anything to follow him; but he never suggested it for a moment. Constance sorrowed in secret, but she always showed to her husband a calm and smiling face.

Frederic bade her farewell, tenderly promising to hasten his return, and be with her in a month's time. She tried to be courageous, and he left, recommending her to Ménard and to Dubourg; but Constance had no need of entertainment; although absent, Frederic would be always near her, always reign in her thoughts.

It was the month of August. At this beautiful season the air of the country was especially delightful. Constance decided to visit her estate in Montmorency during her husband's absence. There she would be quieter than in Paris, and nothing would distract her from the thought of him; she could count the moments which must elapse until he returned to her. The Count of Montreville spent some time with his daughter-in-law in the country; but a man of the Count's age has certain fixed habits, and distractions are

almost necessary to him. The Count loved Paris, where he had a great number of acquaintances, and it flattered his inclinations to meet them. After a week in the country he returned to his favorite city to devote himself to his accustomed pleasures.

Constance remained alone with M. Ménard and the servants. They were at the beginning of the quarter, and Dubourg had not yet come to the country. Constance did not expect to be wearied; when the heart is well filled the head is never empty. The old tutor was her assiduous companion; he spoke to her of Greek and Roman history, and quoted his classic authors, sometimes plunging very deeply into ancient history. He was not always sure that this amused Constance; but when he had finished speaking, she never failed to reassure him with an amiable smile.

Toward the close of the day Constance walked out to the belvedere. It was her favorite retreat; it was there that Frederic and she had begun to understand each other; it was there that she had received her first impressions of love for him Since that time she had visited the belvedere very often, and now she went there to await the return of her husband. Seated upon this eminence, she commanded a view of the entire valley, and could look over all the country which surrounded the walls of her garden.

One beautiful evening, when she cast her eyes over the road that ran before her house, Constance saw a young woman seated at the foot of a tree, and holding in her arms a little boy, not much more than a baby. This unfortunate creature appeared to be in the greatest misery. She was watching her child with a sort of anguish, and covered his face with kisses in the abandon of her despair. Constance was deeply moved. At this moment M. Ménard ascended to the belvedere.

"Look!" she said. "Do you see that poor woman down there, how she is kissing her baby? She must be in great trouble. Do you see her?"

"In a moment, madame," said Ménard; "I'm hunting for my glasses. Where the devil have I put them?"

At this moment the poor woman raised her eyes and saw Constance; her glance became so expressive, so supplicating, that it was impossible not to understand her.

"Oh, she is weeping!" cried Constance. "Wait, wait, you poor thing; I'm coming down!"

Constance quickly left the belvedere, while Ménard looked on all sides, searching in vain for his glasses.

At a distance of a few steps a little gate opened upon the fields; Constance unfastened it, finding herself very near the unfortunate one whom she wished to help. As she approached the poor woman, she was still more sorry for her, for the

features of the mendicant showed both suffering and despair; but it was especially for her child that she besought the pity of Constance. When the lady approached, the poor woman presented him to her, and great tears rolled from her eyes, reddened by weeping and misery.

"Poor little fellow!" said Constance; "how pale he is, how thin! But he has very pretty features."

She took the child in her arms and said to the mother,—

"Come with me; I will give you what you need. Follow me."

The unfortunate woman rose to her feet and tried to walk, but she fell immediately; she had not the strength to advance.

"Good God!" cried Constance, "how dreadful! This unhappy mother! Monsieur Ménard, come and help me take her to the house."

"Here I am, here I am, madame; they were in my waistcoat pocket," cried Ménard, as he hurried forward. "Oh, oh, well, here is someone who needs help."

"Hold her up, help her to walk; poor woman, how sorry I am for her! My God! is it possible that there is such suffering in the world?"

"It is very possible, surely, madame; but we must find out causa causarum."

With the aid of Ménard and Constance, who carried the child, the poor woman was able to

reach the house, where Constance hastened to do all that she could for the comfort of the mother and her little one; as the poor mendicant regained her strength, she watched her with interest.

"See now," she said to M. Ménard; "she is very young yet, and in such a pitiful state. Her features are very attractive. It breaks my heart to see her. Poor mother! where did you come from, and where do you want to go?"

To these questions the unfortunate woman could make no response. We begin to imagine the reason. Constance had just been the means of helping Sister Anne and her little son.

It was ten days since the young mute had left Paris, and since then she had wandered about the country. Forced to ask everywhere for shelter and food, often coldly repelled, often deprived of food for herself and her boy, Sister Anne had felt her strength diminish and her courage disappear day by day. Despair entered her heart, undermined all her forces, and the unfortunate woman was waiting for death when she embraced her child so tenderly. At that very moment the good fortune which had brought her to the house of Madame de Montreville permitted that lady to perceive her and come to her succor.

Constance, astonished at receiving no response to her questions, repeated them, when Sister Anne put her fingers on her lips, and shook her head sorrowfully, to indicate her cruel affliction.

"O Heavens, she cannot speak! Poor woman! and she is alone with her child, without money, without a guide, without even being able to ask her way. Oh, that is too much! It is too bad to endure!"

Constance leaned toward Sister Anne, the tears rolling down her cheeks at the sight of such misfortune. The young mute, deeply touched by this kindly pity, to which she was not accustomed, took the hand of her benefactress, covered it with kisses and pressed it to her heart.

"My faith!" cried Ménard, and he drew out his pocket handkerchief, for the good tutor could not help being much touched by this scene. "My faith! I confess she was in a very critical condition. The tongue is very necessary in every moment of life, and I don't see how anyone can get on without it. It would be like a fox without a tail, a butterfly without wings, or a fish without fins."

Constance did not cease her attentions to Sister Anne and her son. The little fellow already laughed in her arms. He was at that happy age where sorrow quickly disappears at sight of a cake or a toy. Constance could not let him go from her arms.

"Wait, now," said she to Monsieur Ménard; "look how he smiles at me."

"Well, I should think he would; you have been giving him candy. We catch men with

sugared words, and children like the sugar without words. In that case, children show more wisdom than men."

"What pretty features he has, and what lovely eyes! It may be an illusion, but it seems to me he has eyes like my husband."

"My pupil? Well, isn't it rather difficult to see a resemblance between eyes of two years and eyes of twenty-three?"

"Poor little fellow! At all events, I love him already. How happy I should be if I had a child like that!"

"That will come, madame. Sarah was ninety years old when she gave birth to Isaac. You have plenty of time still."

Sister Anne felt great pleasure when she saw Constance caress her son. Madame de Montreville, who could not keep her eyes off him, was still convinced that he bore a strong resemblance to her husband. M. Ménard looked at Sister Anne with deep pity; it never occurred to him that this poor mendicant was the same young girl whom he had seen in the wood at Vizille, seated by Frederic's side. It would have been strange had he recognized her, for he had only seen her for a moment. Then she was radiant with the pleasure of love; her charming features were not worn by tears and sorrow; the fatigue of a difficult journey, and the continuance of constant suffering, had not given her a wavering walk.

Besides, Ménard had never learned that the young girl was a mute; he could not, therefore, suspect that she was before him.

"Do you know how to write, poor woman?" said Constance to Sister Anne.

The poor creature made a sign that she did not.

"What a pity!" continued Constance. "I should so like to know the name of this pretty child."

The young mute looked eagerly about her. They had taken her into a small room which looked out upon the garden. She went out, beckoning to Constance to follow her. She broke a branch from the nearest bush; then she bent toward the earth and traced upon the sand which covered the garden walks the name of her boy.

"Frederic!" cried Constance, as she read the name that Sister Anne had written. "What! you have named your child Frederic? Oh, I am sure that will make him still more dear to me. Frederic! But that is exactly the name of my husband. What do you say to that, Monsieur Ménard? Is it not singular?"

"I don't see anything very extraordinary in that," said the tutor, "as there are a great number of Martins, of Pierres and of Pauls, so there ought to be a good many Frederics. I only know one name invented by Plautus which never became common. It was this, — Thesaurochrysonicochrysides. So if I had been blest with a son I

should have given him this name, though it is not very easy to pronounce."

Constance had again taken the little boy on her knees. She called him Frederic, and the child responded to this name, which he was accustomed to on the farm; he lisped the word "Mamma," and looked about, seeming to search for the good villagers who had talked to him.

"I really wish my husband could see this lovely child," said Constance. She seemed lost in thought for some time. Then she approached Sister Anne, took her hand, and observed tenderly her slightest signs, so that she might understand her answers.

"Where were you going with your little boy? She doesn't know. Unhappy woman! You have neither father nor mother? They are dead. And the father of this child, your husband; why is he not with you? She weeps, poor little thing! He has abandoned her. How could anyone abandon such a pretty child, such an interesting woman? How unfortunate she is! Oh, it is frightful! He must have a heart of stone. But be comforted, my dear; dry your tears; I will not desert you. Yes, I have decided that. I will take care of you and of your child. You shall not leave me any more. You shall live with me; I will find something for you to do. Perhaps you can work with the needle; or I will teach you to sew. I will have your little boy educated under my own eyes. My husband is good, he is sensible and generous;

oh, I'm very sure that he will not blame me for what I am doing. He will love you too, and you shall end your days with us. Do you understand, poor little mother? Don't cry any more, and don't tremble any more for your poor baby. From this time on misery shall not touch you; and — well, look now, Monsieur Ménard; she is throwing herself at my feet. She is kissing my hand, as if I were God. What good would riches be if you could not make someone happy with them?"

"Madame, to give in sweet charity is one of the precepts of the gospel; but unhappily every one does not practice it as you do."

"But it is time to think where this young woman must sleep," said Constance, as she led Sister Anne toward the house. "After all the fatigue she has endured, she must be in need of rest. Where shall we have her sleep? Oh, there is a little lodge in the garden. My husband wanted to use it as a study; but he can work in his room. Yes, that will be best. Monsieur Ménard, please go and give the orders. Let them carry a bed there, so that it will be ready for her this evening; tomorrow I will make the other arrangements. There she will be quiet; she will have her son near her, and in the morning she can walk in the garden."

M. Ménard went to tell the servants to make ready the pavilion in the garden, while Constance

remained with Sister Anne. The poor girl could not sufficiently show her gratitude. Her features already evinced less depression. Constance, watching her closely, found her more interesting every moment. The young mute was not at all like those professional mendicants who are always trying to arouse sympathy by means of complaints or importunities; then, when they receive help, they have no feeling of gratitude. Sister Anne was sweet and shrinking. She seemed surprised when she inspired interest. It was easy to read in her eyes her recognition of the kindness she received; and there was about her, in all her person, an indescribable something which seemed to indicate that she was not born in the lowest classes of society.

"When I look at her," said Constance, "I am more and more astonished that anyone could desert her. Her features are so delicate. Her eyes are so soft and full of charm. How pretty she would be if she were better dressed! And you, dear little fellow, — oh, I shall take great care of you."

Ménard coming to announce that everything was in readiness at the pavilion to receive the poor woman and her child, Constance took Sister Anne by the arm and led her thither, observing everything, to see that no comfort was lacking for the night; then she left her, telling her to sleep in peace, and be no longer troubled or anxious.

Sister Anne pressed her hand upon her heart, and Constance went away deeply moved, remarking to Ménard, "Oh, now I shall not miss Frederic so much; I shall have something else to think of. I shall forget my own sorrows in solacing those of others."

CHAPTER XIV

The Arrival of Dubourg. The Storm Gathers

Sister Anne upon awakening the next morning was afraid at first that all that she saw around her was but the effect of an illusion. After suffering the most pitiable poverty and distress, after wandering so long, often unable to obtain a shelter where she and her baby could pass the night; after experiencing all that a mother can who fears every moment for her child's life, to find herself at last in this pleasant and comfortable room, sleeping on a good bed, relieved of all her anxiety for the future, all her care for the present, and surrounded by kindly people, was hardly comprehensible.

In place of the cold disdain of unthinking pity she had received the most touching and loving attention from a generous woman, who doubled her alms by the grace with which she bestowed them. The change was so sudden that the shrinking heart, withered by its bitter experiences, feared to yield to the feeling of a happiness in which it could not yet believe.

Sister Anne embraced her son, then she rose

and led him into the garden which surrounded the little house where she had slept. What a delicious retreat it was! what a happiness to live there, and guide the first steps of her child through the flowers! Little Frederic already ran alone in the pathways of lilies and roses; if he stumbled, the thick sand broke his fall, and the child waited, smiling, until his mother came and helped him to run again.

Constance wakened very early; all night she had thought of the young mute and her son. The kindness she planned did not allow her to sleep; for pleasure also brings insomnia, and women throw into all they do an ardor and excitement which is unusual with men; if they are often absorbed in dress, deeply preoccupied with frivolous matters, how much energy of spirit will they not manifest in doing a good action?

Madame de Montreville hastened to descend to the garden. She wished to see again her new charge. She found Sister Anne and her son seated under an arbor of honeysuckle. The little boy played at his mother's feet. When she saw Constance coming, she rose, and hastened toward her. She seized one of her hands and pressed it to her heart.

"You are already up," said Constance, kissing little Frederic. "How did you pass the night? Well? So much the better. After such great weariness you needed rest. This poor little fellow

smiles at me; he really seems to recognize me. But I don't want you to keep on these clothes. Come, come with me; I wish to give you one of my dresses. I am sure it will fit you; we are nearly the same figure. Oh, you mustn't refuse me; you must obey me or I shall be offended."

Constance led Sister Anne and the boy to her apartment. There she selected one of her simplest dresses and compelled her protégée to put it on. With this new costume the young mute seemed to gain fresh graces; and her timidity, her embarrassment, had none of that awkwardness which people so often reveal when they wear garments to which they are not accustomed.

"She is charming," said Constance. She called her maid, and told her to arrange the hair of the young woman very simply but tastefully. After it was done she said, "How pretty she is now! and she will look still better after a few days, when she has recovered from her weariness. Her color will be better, and that will be more becoming. Come and look at yourself, and don't cast down your eyes. You need not be ashamed because you are so pretty."

Constance led Sister Anne to a mirror. The young mute glanced at herself with some hesitancy at first, but soon she was a little reassured, and she blushed with pleasure; a young woman is never quite untouched by an adornment. After Sister Anne had looked at herself for some min-

utes, she threw herself at the knees of Madame de Montreville.

"Oh, I don't want you to kneel to me," said Constance, as she raised her; "I want you to love me, and I want you to be happy; that is all. As to your boy, I'm going to make him beautiful too. I shall send to Paris for the things he ought to have."

M. Ménard, who had not lost sleep over the misfortunes of the poor mendicant, at length came downstairs, and was quite surprised when he saw Sister Anne in such different apparel, and with such a happy air.

"Well, Monsieur Ménard, how do you like her in this?" Constance asked him.

"My faith, madame, she is so improved that I did not know her at first."

"You see, in her other clothes you observed nothing but her misfortune. You did not notice the delicacy of her features."

"There is no doubt that misfortune makes us homely; besides, elegance always adds new charms. We don't dine so pleasantly when the tablecloth is not clean; and the most ordinary wine tastes better out of cut glass."

All day long Constance was occupied with her plans for Sister Anne. The apartment on the first floor of the pavilion was arranged and ornamented with everything that could make it more delightful. By the orders of Madame de Montreville, a

pretty little cradle was carried in, and stood near the bed of the young mother. Pots of flowers were placed on the window sills. "She cannot have other pleasures," said Constance; "books and music are closed to her. The poor little thing knows nothing of these delights, so we must surround her with what she can enjoy."

Sister Anne did not know how to show her appreciation of so much kindness. Constance was amused at the astonishment which each novelty roused in the young mute. She was especially delighted with the effect of the piano, which Sister Anne heard for the first time; Constance mingled her sweet voice with its music, and so keen was Sister Anne's pleasure that the tears sprang to her eyes. The joy of music was vividly realized by this burning soul, which had never learned to conceal its emotions. When she saw the arts of sewing and embroidering, Sister Anne sighed, and manifested her regret that she knew nothing of these things. But Constance assured her that she would instruct her, and the young mute had such a great desire to be useful that in a little while she was mistress of these various occupations.

A week had rolled away since Constance had given a home to Sister Anne and her son, and every instant seemed to increase the attachment which she had for them. The child began to love Constance immediately, and responded eagerly to

her caresses. Sister Anne was always sweet, attentive, and grateful, and she proved to Madame de Montreville that she had not misplaced her generosity.

One morning, while the young mute walked with her son in the gardens, Dubourg arrived at his friend's country house. It was past the middle of the quarter. Constance, knowing from her husband Dubourg's habits, was astonished that he had not come before.

"You are very welcome," said Madame de Montreville. "You promised my husband to come and see me during his absence, but I began to think you were not coming at all."

"Madame," said Dubourg, smiling, "I am not one of those friends who pretend to make wives forget their husbands, but if I can amuse you a little, I shall be glad to do so until the next quarter, and in fact all the year, if I can be of any use to you."

"Oh, you will see something new here. I have someone with me now. During Frederic's absence I have made an acquaintance."

"I am sure that will please your husband."

"I hope so, truly."

"My dear Dubourg," said Ménard, "madame is too modest to tell you that she has taken in a poor woman and her child, and saved them from starvation."

"Never mind now; don't talk about it, Mon-

sieur Ménard. Is not this young woman worthy of all I have done for her? Could I have found a better object for my kindness?"

"I confess that she has learned to work very quickly. I really think I can teach her to read."

"You will see, Dubourg, how pretty she is, and how interesting, and her son also. She has a little boy, two years old, who is perfectly charming."

"Ah, she has a son?"

"Yes; I am sure you will say, as I do, that he resembles — but I want you to see that for yourself; I will go and find her."

Constance hastened away to the garden.

"What a lovely woman she is!" said Dubourg. "Frederic certainly ought to consider himself fortunate, and why is he staying away so long?"

"My dear Dubourg, business must come before everything. Of course he has a prize — we know that; but he has inherited with his wife both farms and estates. He must become acquainted with his property."

"But why doesn't he take his wife with him? Do you not think she would have been glad to accompany him?"

"I won't say that, but — he is good; you always know where to find him."

"Hum! I hope this voyage doesn't conceal some project. It would break Frederic's heart to cause his wife any pain, but you never know what these sentimental men are going to do."

"But I tell you that my pupil is visiting his property. What the devil! And how about dominoes? You begin to be a little strong in the game?"

"Well, I am better than you, because you never know where the double six is. But let us go and find Madame de Montreville. I am curious to see this woman who interests her so much."

"It is a woman with whom it would be difficult not to agree, for a quarrel can only result from a discussion; when there is no discussion there can be no quarrel; and it is not possible in this case to have a discussion because—"

But Dubourg did not hear the last of Ménard's sentence. He was already in the garden. He saw Madame de Montreville from a distance holding a child in her arms, and near her was a young woman, dressed in a simple white gown, with her hair neatly arranged. He went on. The young woman perceived him. She ran, she flew toward him; she seized him by the arm; she looked at him with anxiety; and Dubourg remained stupefied, for he recognized Sister Anne.

"My God! what is the matter with her?" cried Constance, as she approached Dubourg, who had not recovered from his surprise in recognizing the young mute in such a different costume, and with Constance, who held the baby in her arms.

"How your presence seems to excite her!"

cried Constance. "Why does she look at you like that? She seems to question you; her eyes are positively talking. Do you know the poor little thing?"

"But, no — yes; oh, well, I saw her once; but she looked so different then. This dress and the child, — my faith, I did not recognize her!"

Dubourg was troubled, embarrassed. He did not know what to say. Sister Anne still held his arm, and her eyes begged him to answer their questions.

"What! you know her?" cried Constance with surprise. "But what does she want of you now? Can you imagine what is interesting her so much?"

"Oh, pardon me. I begin to understand. I knew this poor girl's lover, and she is asking me for news of him."

"But tell her quickly then; see, her eyes are full of tears."

"My faith! I don't know anything good to tell her; her betrayer has gone to a distant country. Doubtless she will never see him again. I do not know what has become of him."

Dubourg had addressed Sister Anne. "Like you, I have not seen him again; so, poor child, you must try to forget him."

Sister Anne paid the greatest attention to these last words of Dubourg. She dropped her head upon her bosom when he had finished speaking; then she gave free course to her tears, and, retir-

ing, seated herself in a little grove, where she could yield to her sorrow.

"Poor woman!" said Constance. "Alas! she must have loved the man who abandoned her. Who could have the heart to abuse such innocence?"

"Madame, it was a young painter, who was then travelling for his education. In looking for pretty views he met Sister Anne, for that is her name. She is, I believe, a peasant's daughter; but I can't prove that, because I don't know her family. At all events, my friend saw her; he fell in love with her, — these painters have an exalted imagination. The result is the boy. That is all I know about it, for I only saw this young girl once, when I was walking with my friend."

"I think he was very guilty. You men treat such things lightly. In your eyes, it is a very slight thing to betray a woman and then leave her. You think these are only the frivolities of youth, and you are proud of sowing wild oats."

"Oh, madame, I can flatter myself that I have never betrayed anyone."

"I am speaking generally; but I am very certain that my Frederic would never be guilty of such conduct. He is too sensitive, too loving, ever to abuse a young heart. See what terrible consequences come from such weakness. This poor little thing was ashamed of her fault, found herself abandoned, and fled from her relations and

the place of her birth. Without money, and incapable of making her wants known by speech, she has wandered everywhere through the country and in the city, a prey to the horrors of want. Unfortunate creature! how she must have suffered! Oh, had you seen her when I found her, she would have filled you with pity! But from this time she will have a friend. I shall never desert her, and, if I cannot make her entirely happy, at least I can save her from all fear of poverty and misery."

Dubourg made no response; the sight of Sister Anne had given him much cause for thought. "Your presence has renewed her sorrow, because it has recalled her betrayer," said Constance. "Go away for a little while, and I will try to console her, although I know very well there is not much consolation for such pain. If Frederic should forget me, could I ever know a moment of happiness? But, at least, she has her boy, and his caresses will soften her sorrow."

Constance carried the little Frederic to his mother's knees, and Dubourg returned swiftly to the house, where he sought Ménard. The latter, who did not know what had happened, was not a little alarmed when he saw the startled look of his former travelling companion.

"All is lost, Monsieur Ménard!" cried Dubourg, as he paused before the tutor.

"What! who is lost? Is it another coach of

King Stanislas, or the snuffbox of the King of Prussia? You know I am not interested in those things."

"Oh, I'm not talking about such follies; this is a very serious matter; it concerns the happiness, the repose of Frederic and his wife."

"Well, I wager it's not true; you are concocting me another tale, just to hoax me, but non me ludit amabilis insania."

"Will you listen to me, Monsieur Ménard? By Heaven! how is it that a man of your age could not prevent such a catastrophe?"

"Why do you say of my age, Monsieur Dubourg? Please explain yourself."

"What! and you have let Madame de Montreville receive and take into her house —"

"Well, who now?"

"Heavens! that woman for whom Frederic has committed a thousand follies, who turned his head, with whom he lived six weeks in the wood; that young girl whom he adored, whom he still loves perhaps, for the heart of man is incomprehensible; — well, that Sister Anne, the little mute of the wood, the young girl of Vizille, is she whom Madame de Montreville has taken into her house."

"O my God! and who told you that?"

"What! and didn't you recognize her?"

"Recognize her! Why, I saw her but for one minute, and then from a distance. I haven't so

good an eye for young girls as have you, monsieur; and how could I suspect it? I didn't know she was a mute. Did anyone tell me? And if they didn't tell me, could I divine it? How should I know? These young people are unreasonable. Could I know Latin if they hadn't instructed me in it?"

"Well, you know it now."

"Good Heavens! they have beaten it into me. Good God! the blows I received for the Epitome, and how many tasks I did before I learned the stories of Phædrus!"

"Will you pay attention, Monsieur Ménard? I am talking to you of Sister Anne, and she is here with Frederic's wife!"

"I understand; I understand very well."

"When Frederic returns she will see him; her trouble, her tears, her caresses and excitement, will discover the truth! Think, then, what Madame de Montreville will experience! How will she bear it? She adores her husband, and believes him a model of fidelity; and here is his mistress in the house with a child,—his child, remember!"

"Yes, yes; I thought of all that."

"Well, speak; what shall we do about it?"

"I don't know what to do."

"It is impossible that we should let Sister Anne stay under the same roof with Frederic!"

"To be sure, it's very embarrassing; but she was in such an unhappy state!"

"Why, do you think I want to abandon her? Oh, my income is only sixteen hundred livres, but I would give this to her with a good heart, so that her presence need not destroy the happiness of these young people. Yes, I will go to work again, if necessary, or I will pass the four quarters of the year with Frederic; but, surely, this young woman and her child shall be protected from suffering."

"That is very good of you, dear Dubourg. If I had anything I would do the same; but I have nothing except my old classics, and they would do her no good, because she cannot read."

"But how can we get Sister Anne away from this house?"

"That will be very difficult, because Madame de Montreville already loves the young mute. She is really foolish about the baby. She thinks he looks so much like my pupil, and indeed I think there is no doubt about the resemblance."

"I don't know what to invent, what to imagine. When will Frederic return?"

"In eight days; we have plenty of time."

"Time! Those eight days will soon be gone, and if he should find Sister Anne here—"

"It seems to me that we might warn the little thing not to say a word."

"I know very well she won't say anything, but her gestures, the expression of her features, will talk plainly enough."

"Well, now, I confess to you that I have often no idea what she means."

Dubourg tortured his spirit to find a way to remove Sister Anne and her son, while Monsieur Ménard remained with his eyes fixed upon the snuffbox, and appeared to be considering very deeply; but in reality he was thinking about a rabbit pasty, which had come from Paris that evening, and which was to appear at dinner.

Constance returned with the young mute and her son. Sister Anne's features betrayed her sorrow; but she was calmer, more resigned. When she saw Dubourg she smiled sorrowfully, and presented her son to the young man, who looked at the boy with great interest, and was startled to notice the resemblance which he already bore to Frederic.

"Don't you find him charming?" asked Constance.

"Yes, madame," replied Dubourg, as he kissed the child. "He is a beautiful boy."

"Is he like his father?"

"Very much."

"And don't you think there is quite a likeness to my husband?"

"Oh, not at all."

"That's very singular; it struck me the first thing. His name is Frederic too, and I believe I love him more on that account."

Constance took the child in her arms; Sister

Anne looked at her with much affection, and Dubourg turned his eyes away to conceal the sensations which this scene gave him

During the rest of the day Dubourg racked his brains to think of some means of getting Sister Anne away from Madame de Montreville; but he could hit upon no plan. What excuse could he make to entice a young woman from a home where the sweetest cares were lavished upon her, and where her son was covered with caresses? Sister Anne would never consent; she would see in any such suggestion nothing but frightful ingratitude, and her loving and tender heart was incapable of conceiving such a thought. If he told her that the husband of Constance was her betrayer, the task would be still more difficult; for the desire to see Frederic outweighed every other consideration in her soul. She believed that she was united to her lover forever by the oaths which they had exchanged; how could she understand that another woman had also a right to him, if not more just at least more sacred than hers?

Dubourg dared not risk this means, and he tormented himself in vain to think of another. At last he went to Ménard and said, —

"Well, have you found any expedient by which we can get Sister Anne out of this house?"

Ménard took another pinch of snuff, and reflected for five minutes, then he responded with great serenity, "I have not thought of a thing."

In talking with Constance, Dubourg endeavored to induce her to send the young mute and her son to live on one of her estates, at a distance from Paris; but Madame de Montreville was quite opposed to this idea.

"But why," she said, "should I deprive myself of the society of this young woman and of the sight of her boy? I already love him as if he belonged to me. Far from me, who would give the same care to this unfortunate one in her affliction? No, I will never separate myself from her. Each day I feel that I become more attached to her; and if you could see how grateful she is because of what I have done for her. Oh, I have read in the depth of her soul! I have not misplaced my generosity, and I am sure that Frederic will approve of what I have done."

"My faith!" said Dubourg to himself, "I have done all that I can; and, after I've given myself the headache to separate these two women, I don't believe anything more could be expected of me. I will let things take their course and await events. All that I can do now is to warn Frederic when he returns."

The evening of the day on which Dubourg arrived, Madame de Montreville said to him,—

"I want you to see the pleasure that music gives to this poor unfortunate. When she hears me sing and play upon the piano, it seems as if she would speak."

Constance took Sister Anne by the hand and led her to a seat near the piano. The young mute was more sorrowful than usual, for the presence of Dubourg had recalled all her painful memories; but she smiled at her benefactress, and made every effort to appear less melancholy.

Constance had played several pieces, when she paused a moment and said,—

"I have not yet sung for her the pretty ballad that my husband is so fond of."

Constance played the introduction to her song, but Dubourg heeded not the music. He was thinking of the strange chance which had brought Sister Anne to the wife of Frederic. Ménard, seated in a corner, endeavored to comprehend the melody; little Frederic played near his mother, who listened attentively to her benefactress.

Constance had scarcely sung the first words of the ballad when Sister Anne displayed an excitement which seemed to increase every moment. She leaned toward Madame de Montreville. She listened, but she scarcely breathed; every fibre in her body quivered; all her faculties were absorbed by a powerful memory; and Constance had not finished her stanza before a mortal paleness covered the features of the young mute, who groaned plaintively and fainted away.

Constance, absorbed in her music, did not notice the suffering of Sister Anne; but, hearing her groan, she ran toward her immediately.

"Good God!" she cried; "what is the matter now? She has lost consciousness!"

Dubourg hastened to the assistance of the young woman, and M. Ménard hurried to find the salts and bring help.

"Do you understand what can be the matter with her? She listened with pleasure, and suddenly she fainted."

"Madame," said Dubourg, who wished to take advantage of this circumstance to carry out a little plan he had formed, "do you see that this young woman is not always entirely herself, that there are some moments when she seems in delirium?"

"No, I haven't observed that. Since she has been here she has been very reasonable, and her melancholy appeared quite natural to me. Poor little thing! she does not open her eyes."

"Oh, that's nothing. No doubt the emotion she felt this morning at seeing me has caused this fainting fit."

"I think so, also."

Ménard returned, bringing a dozen flasks of various kinds of salts. For a long time all their cares were useless. Sister Anne did not recover her consciousness, and Constance was in despair. At last a long sigh announced that the young mute was returning to life, and presently she opened her eyes. Her first look was for her son; he, still too young to realize his mother's danger, had not given up his play. Sister Anne took him

in her arms and kissed him; then she looked about her, as if to thank them for their care.

"Come and rest now," said Madame de Montreville. "This day has brought back all your sorrows; you need to forget them in sleep."

But, instead of accompanying Constance, Sister Anne took her by the hand and led her back to the piano, making signs to her to seat herself.

"No, tomorrow," said Constance. "The music excites you too much now; you shall hear it again tomorrow."

But Sister Anne clasped her hands, and extended them toward her; and her eyes were so expressive, they asked with so much eagerness for what she desired, that Constance had not the courage to refuse. She sat down again to the piano, while Ménard remarked, in a low tone,—

"This woman loves music passionately. They should have taught her to sol-fa-mi."

Constance began an air, but Sister Anne stopped her, and shook her head decidedly, as if to say, "That is not the one." Madame de Montreville tried another, but still the young mute was not satisfied; at last Constance recalled the fact that she was singing a ballad when she was interrupted. She sang it anew, and scarcely had she begun, when Sister Anne's excitement returned, and the attention she gave the song showed this to be the one she wished to hear.

"See now; it was this ballad that agitated

her," said Constance, "and it is the one which Frederic is so fond of."

She had not finished these words, when the young woman took her hand, pressed it forcibly, and made an affirmative sign, which Madame de Montreville did not understand. She looked at Dubourg, and he said to her, in a low tone,—

"I assure you, sometimes she does not know what she is doing; she thinks she sees her lover everywhere. Love has turned her head."

Sister Anne's excitement was somewhat calmed. The tears started from her eyes. She wept, but still she appeared to be comforted. Constance looked at her tenderly, and repeated often,—

"Poor little thing! He was very guilty; how could he have deserted you?"

For some moments all those who surrounded Sister Anne were silent. Constance took her usual means for restoring cheerfulness to the young mute, and lifting little Frederic carried him in her arms to his mother. The young woman looked at her benefactress with gratitude, covered her little son with kisses, then rose and prepared to retire to her room.

Constance insisted on accompanying her to the pavilion in the garden, and there left her, with some last words of encouragement.

"Remember that your troubles are ended," she said, "and be hopeful. Yes, I am sure that your betrayer can be restored to sentiments more

worthy of a man who has loved you ; he can never forget you entirely. Perhaps Dubourg was not well informed. Dry your tears; I'm sure you will see him some day; and how could he ever leave you if he saw you with this dear child in your arms?"

These sweet words sank into Sister Anne's heart, who cherished the beautiful hope that Constance had awakened, and was less unhappy because of it. Madame de Montreville returned quietly to her own apartment. The sight of the misery from which she had saved her new friend caused her an involuntary sorrow, and Frederic was not there to distract her from sad thoughts, to make her forget everything else for him; she had never been separated from him for so long a time, and this absence increased her melancholy.

Before retiring Ménard said to Dubourg, —

"This has been a very stormy day."

"Yes," responded his friend, "and I fear it will be followed by more dreadful storms. If this young woman fainted when she heard the ballad that Frederic was accustomed to sing to her, what will happen when she sees him, and when she learns that he is married to another? Ah, Monsieur Ménard, this idea occupies me incessantly."

"I can believe that; it has really destroyed my appetite."

"Let us endeavor to prevent this catastrophe."

"By all means; I ask nothing better."

"Just think that it involves the repose, the happiness, and even the honor, of your pupil, and that his faults will reflect upon us."

"Pardon me. A fault of syntax or of Latin verse is all very well; but I certainly never taught him to betray young girls. It is rather your bad counsels that have perverted him."

"Monsieur Ménard!"

"Monsieur Dubourg!"

"Let us go to bed."

"Recte dicis."

CHAPTER XV

The Return of Frederic. Constance and Sister Anne

Dubourg had been staying at Madame de Montreville's house for ten days, and he incessantly pondered as to how he could prevent the disastrous effect which the sight of Frederic would inevitably produce upon Sister Anne, for he saw that every day increased the attachment of Constance to her protégé, and the gratitude of the poor mother toward her benefactress. The difficult task of separating them assumed colossal, and in his eyes, insurmountable proportions; what excuse could he offer for desiring to part them, since Constance repeated frequently that she could not pass the day without Sister Anne and her son, and the young mute when near her gentle protectress appeared to forget her misfortune, to feel her sorrows less vividly.

Frederic was expected and might return at any time. Constance was disturbed at his delay; she had lost in a measure the charming gayety which had formerly distinguished her, often there were tears in her eyes. It was at such times as these that Sister Anne would endeavor to console

her, and make her feel that her husband would return soon.

"Is it possible that he no longer loves me?" said Madame de Montreville sometimes.

The young mute took her hand and led her to the mirror, and she seemed to say to her,—

"Look at yourself; how can he fail to love you?"

"Alas!" said Constance in answer, "you were forgotten, and you are as pretty as I am."

The Count of Montreville, who had intended to pass some days in the country, was kept in Paris from an attack of the gout. Dubourg was well pleased with this, and, not knowing that the Count had ever met Sister Anne, did not realize that he could have helped them all out of their difficulties.

At last Constance received a letter from her husband, in which he told her that unexpected business had delayed his return, but that he now had affairs so in hand that he could bring them to a prompt conclusion.

Frederic's letter was tender and sympathetic, and he appeared very anxious to see his wife. But Constance was not quite satisfied; to her his long absence indicated that his love was lessening. He was not there, so she could weep; in his presence she always concealed her tears. It was Sister Anne to whom she confided her troubles, and on whose bosom she poured her tears and found sweet consolation.

Dubourg regarded the delay in Frederic's return as so many days of clear gain, and he said to Ménard,—

"Let us try to spend this time in preventing the meeting of these two lovers."

"Let us prevent it, by all means; that is my opinion also."

"But I have been trying for ten days, and I have not found a way yet."

"My faith! I am more fortunate than you; I found something yesterday."

"Well, speak quick; what was it?"

"It was my recipe for making milk punch; I thought I had lost it forever."

On leaving his wife, Frederic had gone to the farm to discover what had become of Sister Anne and her son, for he was eager to see the child. But from the good villagers he learned that the young mute had long ago started for Paris with her child. He knew not what to think, and he was in complete despair, when the messenger from his father arrived, bringing the customary sum of money and various little gifts which the Count sent to his liberator, which proved that M. Montreville did not know that Sister Anne had left the farm, and that she had not reached the house of her protector in Paris.

Frederic was broken-hearted, and the farm people shared his sorrow, deeply regretting that they had allowed Sister Anne to leave them; but how

could they have resisted her determination? What had become of her? What could she do in Paris without a friend, without a protector? If they had known that the unfortunate girl had been wickedly despoiled of all she possessed, and reduced to beggary, their sorrow would have been deeper still.

Frederic remained only one day at the farm. He then started for Paris, making inquiries all the way along, in the hope of finding some traces of Sister Anne. When he reached Paris he did not stop at his house, for he did not wish anyone to know of his return, in order that he might have time to search in the city for the young mute and her son. For more than eight days he traversed the immense city, investigating its most remote localities, its most deserted and most populous quarters, mounting often to the garrets, and inquired everywhere if anyone had seen a young mute with her child; but his researches were all fruitless; he could not discover a single clue to put him upon the traces of Sister Anne. His heart was torn, and he at last decided to return to Constance. He never dreamed that he should find with her what he had been seeking so far away.

Every day Dubourg stationed himself as ambuscade upon one road, and placed M. Ménard as a scout upon the other, so as to warn him of Frederic's arrival. There were but two roads

which led to the country house, so he was certain he should not miss his friend; but one morning M. Ménard, who had carried Horace with him, and was reading an ode, did not look up as the one for whom he was watching passed him, and Frederic hurried, unannounced, into the presence of Constance, who was alone, and thinking of her husband.

She raised her eyes, uttered a cry of joy, and threw herself into his arms. All the sorrows of his absence were forgotten upon her husband's breast, and Frederic responded to her joy with every mark of tenderness. After the first few moments, which were given up to the pleasure of his return, Constance said to him, —

"Since you went away I have taken an unfortunate woman into the house. Oh, I hope you will love her as I do."

"Everything you do is right, my dear Constance; your heart cannot go astray, so I am sure your kindness is well bestowed."

"Oh, she is a young woman and very interesting. She has been the victim of unfortunate love, and we all feel very sorry for her. Her betrayer abandoned her with the most charming baby, — I am perfectly foolish about it; he is called Frederic, like you. But what is the matter with you, my dear? You are pale; you tremble."

"Oh, I am overtired, perhaps; and it is the excitement of seeing you again."

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WALTER APPLETON

She ran and threw herself into his arms, and fainted as she pointed to her boy.

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY WALTER RUSSELL.

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Frederic sat down, for he could not stand. The information just given him by Constance had roused an overpowering emotion. He looked about him in a quiver of expectation.

"And this woman, this child; where are they?" he asked in a trembling voice.

"They sleep in the pavilion in the garden. But I see her! Come, come quick, my friend!" said Constance, running to meet Sister Anne, who was approaching with her son. "My husband has returned, and I am so happy. Now nothing is lacking for our happiness."

Constance took the young mute by the hand and led her into the apartment, where her husband still was. When she perceived Frederic, Sister Anne gave a heart-breaking cry. She ran and threw herself into his arms, and fainted as she pointed to her boy.

Frederic held up Sister Anne with one hand. Her head had fallen upon his breast, as if she were dead. With the other hand he covered his eyes, and seemed to shrink from looking about him. His son was at his feet, still clinging to his mother's hand; and Constance, agitated and trembling, beheld in astonishment the strange scene.

In one moment a thousand sensations seemed to agitate Frederic's wife. She flushed; her eyes expressed surprise and anxiety. She trembled, and evidently endeavored to repulse the thought

which entered her heart. Her eyes were fixed by turns on Sister Anne and on her husband, and seemed asking for the truth. Her first instinct was to run to Sister Anne and tear her from Frederic's arms.

"What is the matter? What's the meaning of this state? Why should she be so excited at seeing you?" murmured Constance as she looked at Frederic. "Answer me, my dear. Do you know this young woman?"

Frederic had not the strength either to respond or to look at Constance; but he suddenly saw his son. He took him in his arms and covered him with kisses. Then a frightful blow struck the heart of Constance; all the truth was unveiled to her.

Dubourg arrived, followed by Ménard. When he saw Frederic he suspected what had happened, and ran quickly to the help of Sister Anne, crying, —

"She has fainted again; I wager this is another attack of delirium. Oh, I told you this unfortunate woman loses her reason at times."

Constance made no reply. She abandoned Sister Anne to the care of Dubourg and Ménard. She approached her husband, who still held the baby in his arms.

"He is charming, is he not?" she said, in a half-stifled voice, her eyes still fastened upon her husband.

Frederic kept silence. Constance seized the child and tore it roughly from his arms, but instantly repenting of this movement, and ashamed that she was not quite mistress of herself, she covered the child with kisses, and exclaimed sorrowfully, "Poor little thing! you are not to blame."

Dubourg and Ménard had carried Sister Anne to the pavilion, and Frederic and Constance remained alone, with the child. Frederic kept his eyes fixed upon the ground, seemingly unable to meet those of Constance, who was seated at a little distance from him, holding little Frederic on her knees. She tried to restrain her tears, but she could not gather strength to speak, and for several moments the silence was unbroken. At last Frederic lifted his eyes and saw his wife caressing Sister Anne's son. At this sight, he was on the point of abasing himself at the feet of Constance, and confessing everything, when Dubourg entered suddenly.

"Never mind; I hope it will amount to nothing," he said softly to Frederic, and made a little sign so that he should not betray himself. "This young mute is crazy again," he said aloud. "She thinks she sees her lover everywhere. Oh, I have advised madame several times not to keep her here."

"Indeed," Frederic murmured, while he endeavored to regain his composure; "I do not understand what has happened. I have been so

touched at the sight of this unfortunate woman that I hardly knew what I was doing."

Constance said nothing. She gazed at Dubourg and her husband.

"I came after the boy," said Dubourg, approaching to take the child.

"Leave him," said Constance; "Frederic will take care of that."

Frederic was distressed. He could not endure his wife's eyes. In vain Dubourg said to him softly, —

"Good Heavens! keep your head. Remember, it is her happiness which is concerned."

At this moment M. Ménard ran in, all excitement.

"She has come to her senses," he said softly to Dubourg, "but it is impossible to keep her still in her room. She's the very devil himself. She absolutely will see him. She is running around the garden like a crazy woman."

"And why did you leave her?"

Dubourg hastily left the apartment.

"What is the matter now?" said Constance. "Is she worse?"

"No, madame," replied Ménard, who did not know what he ought to say; "but I am afraid her head — oh, these women! — love — quid femina possit."

"I must take care of her!" cried Constance. "I will take the little boy to her, — perhaps when

she sees him! Will you not come with me, Frederic? Don't you want to help me take care of this poor unfortunate?"

Frederic hesitated. He did not know what he ought to do. He was eager to see Sister Anne again; he was heart-broken at her condition. But if he saw her, he was afraid he should betray himself. At that moment loud cries were heard. It was Sister Anne, who was running about the garden like an insane person. Dubourg and the servants ran after her. When the people of the house saw her excitement and how wildly she ran through the pathways of the garden, they did not doubt that she had lost her reason. Dubourg did his best to strengthen this idea, for it might prevent them from suspecting the truth.

Sister Anne saw Frederic through one of the windows of the ground floor. She ran instantly; she reached the apartment, and, quick as thought, threw herself into Frederic's arms. Constance stood near him, but she pushed her aside with a desperate and jealous air, as if she would say, "I only have a right to this place."

All the servants had gathered at the door of the room to look at this scene. Constance's heart was pierced when she saw Sister Anne in her husband's arms; but she did not lose her composure, and, approaching the group of servants, said to them in a trembling voice, "Go away, my friends; this unhappy woman has become insane;

but we will use every possible means to restore her to calmness."

The servants went away, and Ménard ran in search of Dubourg, who was always his refuge in difficult moments. Sister Anne remained with her son, between Frederic and Constance.

The young mute clung to Frederic, who had not the courage to repulse her. She smiled at him, she took his hands, and placed them on her heart. She showed him her son; but at the same time her anxious eyes rested upon Constance, who was seated a few steps away, her face covered with her hands, unable to bear the sight of what was passing before her; tears stifled her, at last they gushed forth, she sobbed. Sister Anne shivered; Constance's trouble disturbed her greatly; while Frederic could not contain himself, and ran to throw himself at the feet of his wife, who did not look at him, but gently pushed him away.

"Go, go," she said to him. "This unfortunate has a right to your love; this child is your son. Console her for all she has suffered since you deserted her. I know the truth now. She is not crazy; she has found her betrayer, the father of her child."

Frederic was crushed. He knelt before Constance, pale and trembling, while Sister Anne fixed her eyes upon him and seemed to be waiting for what he would say. Frederic, taking the hand of Constance, covered it with tears and kisses.

On seeing this a plaintive groan escaped from the young mute, who fell fainting upon the floor.

Constance hastened to bring her help. "Go away," she said to Frederic. "The sight of you is too much for her. Oh, you can trust her to me. I will be just the same friend to her as ever."

Frederic made no response; he went out quite distracted, and Dubourg and Ménard ran toward him. "It is useless to make any pretence," he said to them. "Constance has perceived the truth; she knows all."

"Well, if she knows all," said Ménard, "there is no use in concealing anything."

Constance lavished all her cares upon Sister Anne, and at length the young mute opened her eyes. When she saw Frederic's wife, her first impulse was to push her away. Then glancing about her, she evidently looked for Frederic. Constance showed her her son, and he held out his little arms toward her. Sister Anne, who seemed deeply touched by Constance's kindness, looked at her with less jealousy; but she quivered all over, her teeth shut hard, her eyes closed anew, and a frightful pallor overspread her countenance.

Constance had her carried to the pavilion, where they laid her on the bed. A burning fever attacked her, a real delirium deprived her of her senses. Her unquiet glance roamed about her everywhere. She recognized no one; she even drove away her child.

"Poor little thing! I will not desert her," said Constance; and she passed the entire day seated beside Sister Anne's bed. When evening came, seeing that she was a little calmer, she ventured to leave her; but she stationed her most careful servants with her, and insisted that they must warn her of the slightest change in the poor mute's condition.

When Constance again entered her apartment, Frederic was waiting for her. How different was this day of reunion from those they had formerly enjoyed! Constance was silent; a thousand feelings agitated her; her bosom heaved with emotion, but she tried to conceal what she suffered, and appeared calm before her husband. Frederic, like a criminal awaiting his sentence, remained immovable beside his wife, whose goodness made him realize his faults with new bitterness. He approached her at last, and, not venturing to speak to her, threw himself upon his knees before her.

"What are you doing?" cried Constance, with great sweetness. "Don't kneel to me, dear; you have done no wrong to me. Oh, you should fall on your knees before her whom you have betrayed and abandoned; it is there that you have wrongs to repair. I have no right to complain. Your fault is common with all men. You knew this unfortunate before you married me; she became a mother. But the world would consider your conduct very natural. Far from blaming

you, many would consider it perfectly right that you should desert a woman whom you did not wish to take for your wife; but I confess I have a different standard from these selfish people who seem to make a merit of the tears they cause to flow. What dreadful consequences have followed your sin! If you knew all that this unfortunate creature has suffered! She has been a prey to the most frightful misery; she was on the point of perishing from starvation when I saved her. She was dying with your son. Ah, Frederic, do you realize the remorse you should feel? You are weeping. Oh, my friend, let your tears flow; I would rather lose your heart than believe you unfeeling.

"Listen to me. You have found again the mother of your child, whom you must never again abandon. If you will leave her to me, I will provide for her. She shall live in a house which I will buy in some beautiful country; she shall lack nothing. Her son is charming; I should like to be a mother to him; but it would be cruel to separate her from her child, who can remain with her and yet receive a good education. When he is grown up, you will decide his fate; and rest assured I shall be contented, no matter what your decision may be. This is what I purpose to do for her whom you once loved; but it is possible this plan does not suit you. Perhaps, when you saw this unfortunate, your love for her revived;

perhaps you love her still. O Frederic! I beseech you, be sincere! Let me read in the bottom of your heart. I will make any sacrifice to assure your happiness. Yes, dear love, I would endure anything, except to see you filled with regret for another. If you love her, if she still pleases you, I will go away, I will bury myself on one of my estates; you will see me no more, and you will be free to keep near you the mother and her child."

Constance could no longer restrain the tears which almost suffocated her. She had maintained her composure with great difficulty up to this point; but her courage quite disappeared when she proposed to Frederic to leave him entirely.

"Could I leave you?" he cried, pressing her in his arms. "O Constance! can you believe that I have ceased to love you for a moment? No, I swear to you, you alone possess my heart. I feel how great my faults have been. I wish to provide for the future of Sister Anne; I owe it to her. When I saw her again, could I fail to experience great emotion? And this child, — yes, I love him. I should like to make him happy; and you cannot blame me for that. I approve all your plans, all your projects. I know how good your heart is, and the nobleness of your soul. Ah, how few women there are who would act as you have done! Decide everything, then; take Sister Anne away; let her go tomorrow."

"Tomorrow! Oh, no, dear; the unfortunate is very, very ill. She must not leave here until she has entirely recovered. I will only ask this one thing, — that you avoid her while she is here. Your presence can only do her harm. Promise me that you will not see her. It is the only sacrifice I ask of you."

"Oh, I will do anything that you command."

"As soon as her health is restored, I will take her myself to her new home. I will not leave her until I am sure that she lacks nothing."

Frederic folded Constance tenderly in his arms. Her goodness rendered her still more dear to him. A woman should never employ any other weapon than this. Reproaches and complaints drive away a husband; kindness and indulgence are sure to recall his tenderness.

Constance found happiness again in the arms of her husband. He swore to her that he loved her alone, and she believed his oaths. Could she live without his love?

Early the next morning Constance hurried to the pavilion in the garden, while Frederic went to tell Dubourg and Ménard of his wife's noble conduct.

"There are none like her," said Dubourg. "Preserve her like a precious treasure; you cannot love her too much. You do not know how rare she is."

"There is no doubt," said Ménard, "that the

conduct of Madame de Montreville is worthy of one of Plutarch's heroines, and also that of Cunigonda, wife of Henry II. You know she handled a hot iron to prove her chastity, and I know nothing more beautiful in all history."

Sister Anne was still in an alarming condition; she recognized no one; but the poor unfortunate seemed every moment searching for someone, and stretched her arms eagerly and longingly toward the unknown. Constance watched over her, and saw that she lacked nothing. She herself sent for a physician, and placed beside the invalid an old and tried servant, who did not leave her for a moment. Constance then took the little Frederic in her arms and carried him to her husband.

"Love him well," she said. "By making him happy you will repair some of the wrong you have done his mother. Oh, I seem to love him as if he were my own son. As soon as I saw him a strange presentiment told me that he belonged to you; and, far from loving him less, this idea makes him more dear to me."

Frederic embraced his son. The child often spent a large part of the day with him, for the poor little fellow was now deprived of his mother's caresses. She was possessed by violent delirium, and lay at the point of death for fifteen days. During this time Constance watched beside her unweariedly, in the pavilion. She would not yield

to anyone the care of the sick woman, whom she insisted on watching and sustaining in the most cruel moments of her delirium. She overcame fatigue; she was so absorbed in Sister Anne that she did not recognize her own discomfort. In vain Frederic besought her to take care of her health, to rest a little.

"Let me watch," said Constance. "It seems to me that in what I do for her I can repair a part of the evil that you have caused her."

Frederic did not know a moment's peace until he was assured that Sister Anne was out of danger. He was eager to see her again; but he had promised his wife not to enter her presence, and how could he break his promise, after all that Constance had done for him? Often did he approach the pavilion, where the unfortunate girl was sheltered, and waited impatiently until someone came out who could give him news of Sister Anne; but when Constance approached him he tried to conceal his anxiety. He feared to let her see what an interest he took in the young mute.

Thanks to the assiduous care of Frederic's wife, the young invalid was restored to life; her delirium disappeared; she recognized her child; she pressed him again to her heart, and did not wish to be parted from him. When she saw Constance for the first time, a sudden trembling possessed her; but presently she regained her self-control. She seized the hand of her bene-

factress and covered it with tears and kisses. She seemed to ask pardon for the wrong she had done her, the suffering she had caused her.

"Poor, unfortunate child!" said Constance to her, pressing her hand tenderly. "I will always be your friend. I must try to restore happiness to you. I love you, and I love your child. From this time his future and yours are assured. Do not refuse me this pleasure. It is a debt that I must pay. Your son is charming. His happiness will some day make you forget your troubles. Take courage; you can still be happy."

Sister Anne was silent, and her eyes seemed to say this was impossible. Constance herself did not believe anyone could ever forget Frederic; but, when we are consoling others, it is not necessary to be entirely truthful. The young mute looked eagerly about the room, but soon her eyes rested again upon her benefactress. She seemed to resign herself to her fate, as if she said to her, "I will do whatever you say."

Madame de Montreville assured her husband that Sister Anne was safe, but that convalescence would be necessarily slow. The physician said it would be some time before she could travel; but the vicinity of the garden was fortunate, since the fresh air would enable her more quickly to regain her strength.

Frederic learned with joy that his victim would be restored to health, and each day the desire to

see her, if only for a moment, tormented him. Moreover, another thing troubled him. When the young mute was very ill they would bring to him his son, who would spend a part of the day with him. Frederic grew accustomed to seeing him constantly, and had begun to know the sweetness of a father's love, a sentiment which does not diminish with time or absence. He dared not let his wife know the eagerness he felt to see Sister Anne again, but he was not afraid to inquire after his son.

"My dear," said Constance, "he is now the only consolation of his mother; you surely would not deprive her of that. Later, when time has calmed her suffering a little, I do not doubt that she will send him to you sometimes; but just now she needs him with her constantly."

Frederic was silent. He tried to conceal what he felt, but Constance looked at him and seemed to read the bottom of his heart.

Sister Anne recovered her strength slowly; it was only at the end of several days that she was able to descend to the garden, supported by Constance's arm and accompanied by her son. While she led forth the young convalescent, Constance looked anxiously about, afraid lest she might see Frederic; but she had told him that Sister Anne would go out for a little while, and had warned him to keep out of sight, and Frederic, who knew that his appearance might excite the convalescent too much, remained in his own apartment.

Sister Anne was calmer, but her tranquillity seemed rather the result of profound discouragement than entire resignation. She did not look about her; her eyes were fixed constantly upon the earth; she did not even fasten them upon her son. She no longer wept, but the expression of her features showed how deeply she was suffering; still, her strength gradually returned, so that she was presently able to go out alone, and walk about the pavilion with her little boy.

In a few days Madame de Montreville expected to leave, with Sister Anne and her son, for the home where she intended to establish them. Frederic fully approved of his wife's plan; but he was eager to see once more the woman he had loved so deeply, and who, he was very sure, loved him still.

He knew that every day at dawn Sister Anne went with her son to an arbor at a little distance from the pavilion. One morning he rose while Constance still slept. It was almost sunrise. He could not resist the temptation to see the young mute and her boy; he would not speak, he would not show himself; but he would see her once more. She was to go the next day, and this would be his last opportunity to satisfy the desire that tormented him.

Frederic dressed noiselessly and approached the bed where Constance slept. She seemed restless, but her eyes were closed. She slept, and he could

take advantage of this moment. He hurried softly from the house and entered the gardens. The dawn had hardly begun to dissipate the shadows of the night; all was still in repose. He walked swiftly toward the arbor, which was Sister Anne's favorite retreat. His heart beat furiously. The moment recalled to him the delightful hours of his first love, when he looked eagerly through the wood of Vizille, to discover the young mute upon the bank of the brook where they were accustomed to meet.

She had not yet reached the arbor; but she would probably be there within a quarter of an hour. He seated himself upon the bench where she generally placed herself, and from which he had a good view of the pavilion, where she slept with her boy. Frederic fixed his eyes upon that spot; his heart was full; his soul cherished again the sweet emotions which he had always experienced when he saw Marguerite's miserable cottage. For a moment he forgot all that had passed. He waited impatiently until she came out. It seemed almost as though he should see her coming toward him, leading her little flock of goats.

Time passes quickly in such memories. Suddenly the door of the pavilion opened. A child appeared; it was his son. Frederic was about to run forward to meet him, but he recalled the promise he had given Constance. If he approached the pavilion he should be seen by Sister Anne;

she could not be far behind her child; he must avoid her eyes. He passed behind the shrubbery, and there, concealed by the thick verdure, he waited, trembling, until she appeared.

He had scarcely left the arbor before the young mute issued from the pavilion, holding her little boy by the hand. Frederic could not remove his eyes from her. She was dressed in a simple white gown; her hair was knotted negligently and fell softly over her brow, which revealed plainly her sorrow and suffering. She smiled when she looked at the boy, then paused, glanced into the garden and sighed deeply.

Frederic gazed at her eagerly. The pretty dress in which he saw her seemed to increase the charms which she still possessed. She advanced toward him. She was coming to the arbor. He scarcely breathed. She seated herself upon the bench; she was very near him; only a few branches separated them; but he heard her sighs; he could count the beatings of her heart. How melancholy she seemed! Alas! who would console her now? He had caused all her sorrow, and he could not put an end to it. The baby threw its little arms around its mother's neck. He seemed to wish to cheer her by his caresses. She pressed him to her heart; but she could not restrain her tears. Frederic was no longer master of himself. He heard her sobs. He forgot his promise. He no longer knew anything but the tears of Sister Anne, which

smote him to the heart. He quickly brushed aside the branches which separated him from her. He was at her feet, and his hands clung to her, while he cried, "Forgive me!"

When she saw Frederic, Sister Anne started, as if she would rise and fly; but she had not the strength to do so. She fell back upon the bench; she turned her eyes upon him, and an invincible power forced her toward her lover. He was on his knees; he was begging her forgiveness; she had not the courage to repulse him. She put her son in his arms; then she pressed Frederic to her heart. At this moment a shriek was heard from the distance. Frederic, troubled and startled, came out of the arbor and looked on all sides, but saw no one. He returned to Sister Anne; but she had already taken her son and hastened to the pavilion. He could not keep her; she had escaped from his arms. Her eyes said a sweet farewell to him. She had enjoyed a moment of happiness; but she would not be untrue to her benefactress by staying longer with Frederic.

Sister Anne and her son reëntered their dwelling. Frederic, alone in the garden, was still full of excitement over the pleasure he had experienced in seeing his old love; but this pleasure was mingled with much disquiet. The cry he had heard could not be forgotten. He searched the garden on all sides, but could find no one, and persuaded himself at last that he had been de-

ceived, that the voice came from the fields. For a moment he thought of his wife. Could Constance have seen him? But he rejected the idea. Constance was still sleeping when he left her apartment. He returned to the house. The servants had risen. Dubourg and Ménard came out into the gardens. Frederic dared not go to his wife; he waited until breakfast time to see her.

He walked about with his friends; but he was thoughtful and discouraged.

"Are you troubled because Sister Anne is going away so soon?" said Dubourg to him. "But, dear friend, this is absolutely necessary. A man cannot live under the same roof with his wife and his mistress, even when this last is nothing to him. Women are always jealous, always afraid of accidents, of meetings and recognitions; and, though a woman loves her husband, she cannot sleep quietly under such circumstances."

"Certainly," said Ménard; "you cannot live with a sheep and a wolf. It is like putting a parrot and a canary in the same cage. They will always end by fighting. This does not seem possible with Madame de Montreville; she is an angel of sweetness, and surely the other little woman cannot say a loud word; but, still, naturam expellas furca tamen usque recurret. Besides, a Greek philosopher has said, 'If you want hell upon earth, lodge your wife and your mistress together.'"

"Well, Monsieur Ménard, far from having that thought, I should be happy if this unfortunate were already far away. I feel too much; I'm not sure of myself."

"There is only one thing in this world one can be sure of, and that is that one will have indigestion if one bathes too soon after dinner."

The breakfast hour had come, and Constance appeared; she came in as usual and kissed her husband.

"I deceive myself; she knows nothing," said Frederic.

But he noticed that his wife was pale; that her eyes were red and swollen; that her hand trembled in his. He asked anxiously after her health.

"There is nothing the matter with me," replied Constance; "I am not ill; I am not suffering."

But her tone seemed to deny the truth of her words.

The day advanced, and Frederic saw with surprise that Constance made no preparations for her departure and that of Sister Anne. He ventured at last to ask about it.

"I have changed my mind," said Constance, endeavoring to conceal her emotion. "I do not see why this young woman should leave the house. She is happy with us. Her presence is not displeasing to you. On the contrary, her absence might cause you too much regret."

"What are you saying?" cried Frederic.

But Constance went on, with a little coldness in her tone, and without seeming to notice her husband's excitement.

"No, she will not go; it is useless now." As she said these words, Constance went out and shut herself in her own room. Frederic did not know what to think of his wife's change of plan, and that evening, by order of Mademoiselle de Montreville, her maid announced to Sister Anne that she would continue to live in the pavilion, and that their journey was postponed for the present.

The young mute heard this news with astonishment, but she could not repress a little secret joy at the prospect of still being near Frederic. She was surprised that the dear friend who had shown her so much kindness did not come herself to explain the change of plan, for several days passed and she did not see Madame de Montreville. The same attentions were shown Sister Anne and her son, but her benefactress did not again visit the dwellers in the pavilion.

Constance passed all her time in her room. She did not say anything to Frederic, but her features wore a look of distress, and her suffering was evident, though she made every effort to conceal it. Frederic dared not question her, or when he did so she always said to him sweetly, "There is nothing the matter."

"Zounds!" said Dubourg; "this is very unnatural. This young woman is in the depths of sorrow, yet she wants the other one to stay here. I can't understand it at all."

"No, nor I either," said Ménard; "but I think, like you, that there is something mysterious about it. Tertullian said that the devil was not so malicious as a woman, and I think Tertullian was right."

CHAPTER XVI

The Catastrophe

Sister Anne and her little boy still lived in the pavilion in the garden. The young dumb woman seldom left it, and when she did so it was on rare occasions only that she might walk for a short time in some of the paths which immediately surrounded it. She never went near the house now, for she was always afraid of meeting Frederic, although she cared for him as of old, and her heart longed as eagerly as ever for his attentions and dearly loved presence.

But the husband of Constance dared not approach the pavilion, where his first love dwelt with their child; his wife's unusual manner since the day he had so impulsively taken the poor mute in his arms in the arbor left no doubt in his mind that it was she who had uttered the cry which he had heard and the origin of which he had sought in vain. If Constance had seen him on that occasion at Sister Anne's feet what must she think of his often reiterated promises. Undoubtedly she no longer believed that he loved her alone. He was often almost tempted to throw himself at her feet and assure her that he

loved her always; but he would have to explain why he had been false to his word, which put him in a very difficult position. In this uncertainty Frederic was silent, hoping by his devotion to banish the suspicions which tormented Constance.

Madame de Montreville never left the house, never went into the garden. Her features revealed her depression, her cheeks were pale; she vainly tried to smile, but the sorrow which possessed her was expressed in all her actions. She was always sweet, always good, and she appreciated the kindness of her husband, noticing that he did not go to the garden, though she often besought him to walk there.

"Why do you not wish to leave me?" she said to Frederic.

"Why do you wish me to leave you?" Frederic said to her; "I am always happier when I am with you."

Constance pressed his hand tenderly, and turned away to conceal her tears. She could not forget the scene in the arbor. She saw her husband constantly pressing Sister Anne to his heart. She thought that she no longer possessed his love, and she believed that he was unhappy because he was separated from the young mute. She was willing to sacrifice her peace always to insure his comfort. This cruel thought filled her heart with a thousand torments, and it was difficult for her to conceal her anguish.

"It is impossible for things to continue like this," said Dubourg to Frederic; "your wife is like another woman, and the sadness of the young mute is heartbreaking. Zounds! if these two women stay together they will both die of consumption."

"But what can I do? Sister Anne's fate is entirely in Constance's hands. When I try to speak of it to her, she closes my mouth, or declares again that she will not allow her to go away."

"It is indeed a very embarrassing situation," said Ménard; "and if I were in my pupil's place I know very well what I should do."

"What would you do?" cried Dubourg.

"Heavens! I should do exactly what he is doing."

A very natural event transformed everything in Frederic's home. The Count of Montreville had recovered from his gout, and one morning he arrived at his son's country house.

Dubourg was not aware that the Count knew Sister Anne, but was pleased at his arrival, because he did not doubt that his presence would force Frederic to take a stand. The young man was much disturbed when he saw his father, with whom he never yet had come to an explanation. Should he tell him the truth? Should he let him know that the young mute was in his house? But before he saw his father alone, Constance made him promise that he would not say a word about Sister

Anne to the Count, for she believed that he was ignorant of his son's weakness, and she did not wish him to discover it.

On his part, the Count of Montreville had been much distressed in regard to the fate of the young woman who had saved his life. Informed by his last messenger that she had left the farm to go to Paris, he had searched the entire city without finding her, and could not imagine what had become of her.

On reaching his son's house the Count was struck by the illness and depression of Constance, and inquired eagerly as to the cause of the change. The young woman tried in vain to find a pretext for her indisposition; the old gentleman, being very observing, saw that they were concealing some mystery from him, and determined to discover it. His son was embarrassed in his presence; M. Ménard avoided him as if he was afraid of encountering a reprimand; Dubourg alone seemed glad to see him; everything indicated that something extraordinary was going on in the house.

Constance, knowing that Monsieur de Montreville was accustomed to go to the pavilion to read in the mornings when he came to visit her at Montmorency, hastened to tell him that she had given this place to a young woman and her child, of whom she had taken charge. The Count asked nothing more. He did not dream that this young woman was the one for whom he had been look-

ing so long, and he did not expect to find her at his son's house.

The day after his arrival the Count went out, according to his custom, in the early morning, and turned toward the pavilion in the garden. He was just about to enter, when he recalled what Constance had said to him the evening before, and he turned, therefore, to take his walk on the other side. He had gone but a few steps, when a child came out of the pavilion, and ran toward him. Presently another person seized one of his hands and pressed it to her heart. The Count of Montreville could not repress his surprise in finding himself with the young mute and her child.

Sister Anne, seeing the Count from the window, when he came toward the pavilion, had recognized him immediately, for the features of her protector were graven in her memory, and when he turned in the opposite direction she ran after him.

The young mute showed the greatest pleasure at meeting him; but it was some time before M. Montreville could recover from his astonishment.

"You are here!" he said at last; "and who received you? Do you know the young woman who gave you shelter is the wife of Frederic, your betrayer?"

Sister Anne showed him that she knew, that she had seen Frederic, and that Constance had given her shelter in the pavilion.

Each instant redoubled the Count's surprise; he could not obtain all the information he wished from the young mute, and he was eager to see Frederic.

"Return to the pavilion," he said to Sister Anne. "You will not be there long. You have stayed too long already, poor child!"

Sister Anne obeyed. She returned to the pavilion with her son, whom the old Count could not refrain from tenderly embracing.

Frederic, dreading just what had happened, feared his father would meet Sister Anne, and he had gone in search of him to tell him the truth, when the Count appeared before him. His severe brow informed his son that he had not warned him in time.

"I have seen the person who is sheltered in the garden pavilion," he said, looking at his son attentively, "and I am no longer astonished at the melancholy, at the change, I have noticed in the manners of your wife. Unhappy man! How can you recompense so much love, so much virtue, in such a fashion! How can you endure it that the young woman you betrayed is under the same roof with your wife?"

"I am not guilty in this," replied Frederic, and he related to his father how his wife had received the young mute and her child in his absence. He told him how deeply Constance had become attached to the unfortunate young woman, and all

that had passed since his return. The Count listened to Frederic's story in silence.

"So now," he said, "your wife knows all. She understands that you are the betrayer of this young girl, the father of this child, and yet she wishes that the poor mute shall continue to live in your house?"

"At first she intended to remove her, to take her to one of our estates, where she could have every comfort, and lack for nothing; where her child would be happy. The day of her departure was fixed. I do not know what changed her resolution, but since then she will not allow Sister Anne to be removed."

"And you cannot divine her reason? My son, this conduct is so extraordinary that it must have some secret cause. It is not natural that a woman who loves, who adores her husband should prefer to keep her rival near her, or at least one who has been loved, and may be loved again. But Constance has a soul capable of every sacrifice. She would immolate herself for your happiness. Can you endure this? Do you not see the change that has taken place in her? She can conceal her tears from you, but can she conceal the alteration that has taken place in her charming face, the suffering that is impressed there? Each instant of the day she thinks that you are under the same roof with the mother of your son; that you can see her, speak to her."

"Father! I swear to you it is never so!"

"I believe you truly. But your wife's position is cruel. After tomorrow, your victim will not be under your eyes."

"What! What do you mean, father?"

"Do you blame my resolution?"

"No; very far from that. I feel how I am indebted to you. I do not need to beg you to care for this unfortunate tenderly and — and my son."

"No, monsieur; I know my duty; and the generous intentions of your wife shall be fulfilled. And besides, do you think I can be indifferent to this young woman, and that her son has no right to my love? My heart has become a stranger to the burning passions of youth; but is it therefore closed to true sentiments? Allow me to restore peace, repose, to your wife. It is your duty to make her happy again, by redoubling your attentions and the expressions of your love. In this way, Frederic, you can efface your fault, and repay me for my care of Sister Anne and her son."

Frederic moistened his father's hand with his tears. The Count left him to seek Constance. He did not say a word to her about the young mute; but as he looked at her he admired her, and felt that he must cherish her still more. Constance did not know how to explain the marks of affection which the Count lavished upon her, for his manner was ordinarily cold and formal.

She did not suspect the cause, believing the Count to be ignorant of Frederic's fault.

M. de Montreville sent his servant to Paris, and gave him orders to be at the garden gate, with a carriage and good horses, at dawn the next day. He would take Sister Anne away himself, and he went to the pavilion to tell her of his resolution.

These frequent comings and goings made Dubourg suspect that the Count had a plan in his head.

"We are going to have some changes in the house," he said to Ménard. "Can they restore happiness and pleasure to these walls?"

"Well, we certainly haven't been very gay here lately," said Ménard. "Madame the Countess sighs; my pupil is thoughtful; the young mute says nothing; and even you, dear Dubourg, are not at all like yourself. What ails you?"

"Eh! Do you think I ought to be happy when those I love are suffering? In spite of my philosophy, I cannot be indifferent to the sorrows of my friends."

"As for myself, I am busy all day."

"Yes, but that doesn't interfere with your appetite."

"Do you want me to be ill? Would that make them more cheerful?"

"You don't take enough exercise. You are getting as round as a ball."

"This imbecile of a cook gives us nothing but beefsteaks. How can I help getting fat?"

"I hope a great deal from the arrival of Frederic's father. He has been to the pavilion; he has seen Sister Anne. The situation is going to change, I am certain."

"Oh, do you think we'll have no more beefsteaks?"

"Really, Monsieur Ménard, you were not born to live in France; you ought to go to Switzerland, where they do nothing but eat."

"Monsieur, I was born to live no matter where. When you played the Baron Potoski, you broke the cashbox with your dinners of many courses, and I will not say to you, Quantum mutatus ab illo, because I noticed you yesterday at dinner; monsieur ate all the tunny, and I didn't find a bit when I came to it."

"Tunny is very heavy, Monsieur Ménard; it was not good for you."

"Monsieur, I beg you not to bother about my health, and to leave me some tunny next time. You see, at my age, I can give myself indigestion if I please."

While each one in the house gave up himself to his own conjectures, the Count crossed the garden and entered the pavilion. Sister Anne resided on the first floor. It was already night when M. de Montreville prepared to tell her what he intended to do. He paused a moment before he

entered the apartment of the young woman who had saved his life.

"Poor child!" he said. "I am going to make her unhappy. She must be removed from Frederic. She must be separated from him forever. But this is a duty that I am obliged to fulfil, and her soul is too pure and unselfish not to feel that she must give repose to her friend. She is too sensitive to forget that Constance saved her and her boy from the horrors of starvation, and has shown her every kindness."

The old gentleman reached the apartment of the young mute, who rose and ran to meet him, her eyes expressing the love and respect she felt for him. M. de Montreville considered her for some time in silence. He was deeply touched; but he felt that he must hasten to tell her his plans, that she might be ready the next day.

"My child," he said to her, "I told you this morning that you could not, you must not, remain longer in this place. Your presence here is death to her who has received you. Constance loves her husband; would you destroy her repose and happiness forever? She conceals the torments she feels; but I have read in the bottom of her heart. You would not wish to send that friend to the grave who saved your child?"

Sister Anne made an expressive gesture, which indicated that she was willing to sacrifice herself for Constance.

"Well," went on the Count, "you must go away; you must fly from these places. Fly from them tomorrow at dawn. You must go without seeing your benefactress. I will tell her all your heart would inspire you to say to her. You need not see anyone at the house; it is useless. There is one especially,—but I do not need to warn you to avoid, to carefully avoid, that person."

Sister Anne was broken-hearted at these words. To go so suddenly, and without preparation! To go without seeing him, and forever! It was more than she could bear. She felt her courage abandon her. Her eyes overflowed with tears.

The Count approached her. He took her hand.

"Poor little thing!" he said. "This sudden departure breaks your heart. But in a situation like this delay is a crime. I must tear you from these places; but I have the right to be severe. Take courage, poor child. It is Frederic's father whom you saved from the brigands; it is he who asks you to sacrifice yourself for Frederic's sake."

These words had just the effect the Count expected on the young mother. When she learned that he was the father of her lover, she fell at his feet and lifted her hands as if to ask his pardon.

"Rise, rise," said the Count, kissing her forehead. "Unfortunate girl! If I could only make you happy! At least you will have an existence free from care from this time on; and the future of your boy is assured. I shall take you to a farm

which I will give you. A pretty little cottage belongs to it. You will live there. You will be surrounded by faithful people, who will love you dearly. There you will bring up your son. I shall often share your retreat; and before long I hope tranquillity and peace will be restored to your heart."

Sister Anne listened to the Count, whom she was ready to obey. She felt that she would never know happiness again, but she seemed to say, Do what you please with me; I am ready to follow your slightest wishes.

"So, then, tomorrow, at the dawn of day, I will come for you," said the Count. "I wish to go before anyone in the house is awake. A good carriage will wait for us at the garden gate. Make all your preparations for yourself and your son; it need not take you long. You will find everything you need in your new home. Farewell, dear child! Take courage; I will be ready for you at dawn."

The Count left her. Sister Anne was alone. Her boy slept. It was the last night she should pass near Frederic. She must go. She must fly from him forever. This thought overwhelmed her. She sat motionless on the chair near her boy's cradle. A single thought absorbed her: She must go away from him whom she had tried so hard to find, whom she idolized, who seemed to love her still, when she saw him in the arbor. But

she must go; the repose, the life of her benefactress demanded the sacrifice.

The last hours that she could pass in this dear place flew with the greatest rapidity. Absorbed in her thoughts, she had not yet busied herself with the preparations for her departure. Midnight sounded from the village clock, and the young mute still sat in the chair, near the cradle of her son, in the same position in which the Count had left her.

The melancholy sound of the clock striking the hour roused her from her reverie; she rose and made a little bundle of necessary things. Her preparations were soon finished, however, and several hours of the night still remained. Should she try to sleep? No; she knew this would be a vain attempt. But what thought made her heart beat? Every one in the house slept; she would profit by the last moments that remained to her, and pass them near him. She did not wish to see him; she knew that would be breaking her promise to the Count,—the promise she owed to her benefactress. She would not let Frederic know it, but she would say a last farewell to him. She knew which were the windows of his apartment. She would at least see the place where he slept. It seemed as if she could go with less unhappiness after that, and that Frederic would hear her farewell, in his sleep.

Sister Anne hesitated no longer; she placed

upon a bench the packages she had just made, then stood the lamp which lighted her room on the hearth. Her son was sleeping soundly; she looked at him and her tears fell as she bent over his cradle and thought that she was about to part forever from his father.

Not a sound was heard as she emerged softly from the pavilion. The night was dark, but she knew the garden; her feet scarcely touched the earth; like a shadow, she flew rapidly through the pathways she must traverse, and at last she was before the house. Frederic's apartment was to the right on the first floor. She knelt before his windows; she extended her arms to him; she addressed to him her last farewells.

Bathed in tears, she supported her head on one of her hands, but she could not turn her eyes from the place where she knew her lover was. Sister Anne abandoned herself to despair, to her love, to her regrets. She had been gone from the pavilion a long time; the hours rolled away, she could not tear herself from the place; but she must leave it at last.

The unfortunate creature made a final effort. She rose; broken-hearted she turned away and staggered through the alleys, scarcely able to repress her sobs. Suddenly a brilliant light illuminated the garden. Sister Anne lifted her eyes; she could not imagine what produced this brightness. She advanced; the light appeared more

startling; the obscurity of the night gave place to a frightful clearness,—it was fire, the flames of which lighted all the windings of the garden! As this idea struck her, seized with an indescribable terror, Sister Anne no longer walked; she ran, she flew toward the pavilion. The flames poured in volumes from the windows of the first floor.

A frightful cry escaped from the breast of the young mother. She saw nothing but her son, whom she had left in her apartment, alone in the night. It was enveloped in flames!

In her despair she found new strength. She forced her way into the pavilion. A thick smoke filled the stairway; but a mother knows no danger. She must save her child. She mounted, she searched. She could not find the door, which the smoke concealed from her. Her hands sought it in vain. At last the flames guided her; she penetrated into the apartment. Everything was on fire. A package of clothing had rolled to the light, and the flame had rapidly communicated to all the objects. Sister Anne ran to the cradle, which the fire had just reached. She seized her child. She knew not in what direction to turn; she could not get out. The flames surrounded her on every side; her limbs were burning. She wanted to call. She felt herself dying. At that moment nature yielded to her need. Her voice broke the bonds which enchained it. The unfor-

tunate fell; but she pronounced distinctly the words, "Frederic, come and save your son!"

The fire at the pavilion had been seen by the people at the house, several of whom had not been able to sleep. Frederic was horrified; he rushed from his apartment, calling for help on all sides. Each one rose and hastened out. The universal cry was, "The fire is at the pavilion!" Everyone ran; but Frederic was first of all. He braved death to reach Sister Anne, and entered her apartment a few moments after she had lost consciousness. He took her in one arm, and with the other he held his son. He crossed the flames; he was in the garden; he had saved both of them.

At the news of the danger everyone followed Frederic. Constance was not the last to fly after the footsteps of her husband. It was she who received Sister Anne in her arms, and lavished every care upon her. She had her carried, fainting, to her own apartment. The entire household surrounded the young mother, whose body bore the cruel marks of the fire. Her child had not suffered at all, and they waited impatiently until she opened her eyes, to show her that he was safe.

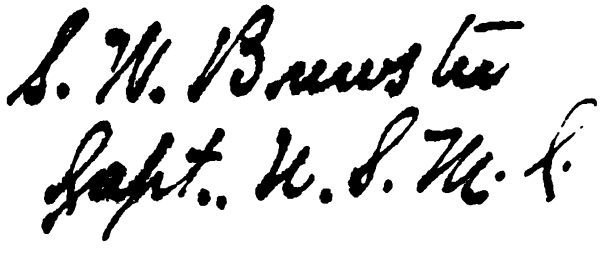
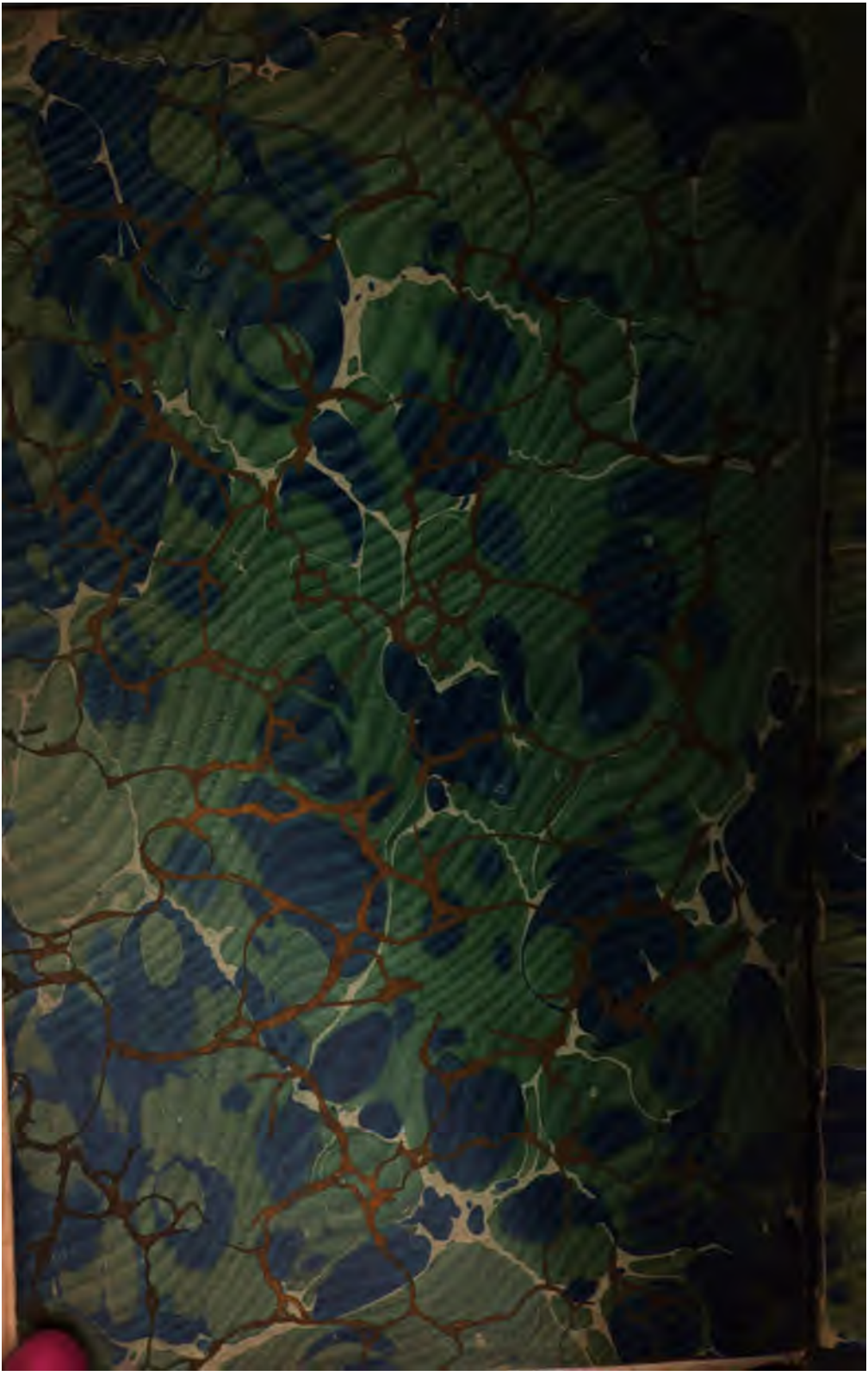
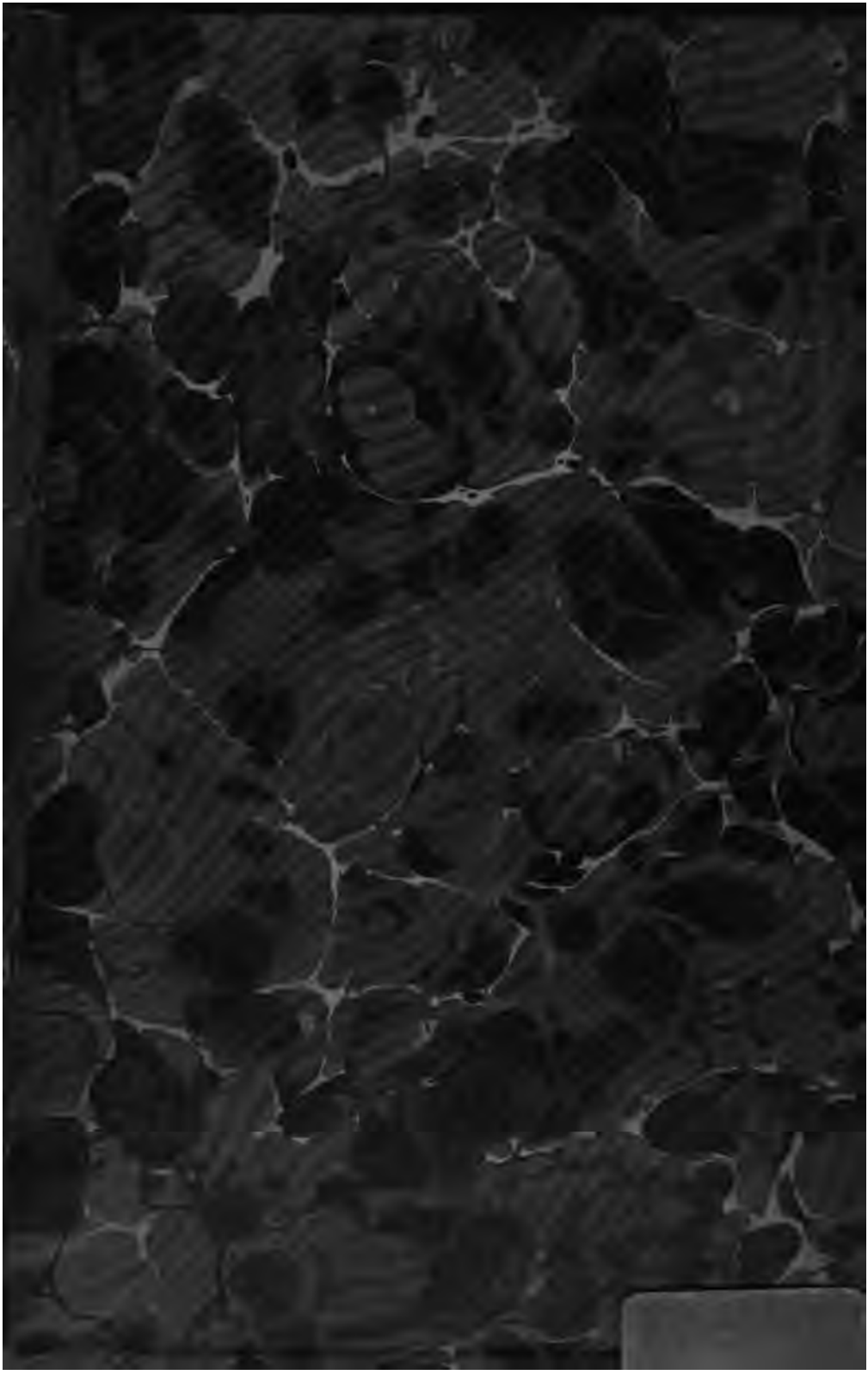
At last a sigh escaped her lips; the light returned to her eyes; Constance showed her the little one. "My boy!" exclaimed Sister Anne covering his face with kisses.

These words threw the observers into the greatest astonishment. They listened. They looked at Sister Anne. They wondered if they had heard aright.

"O my God!" said the young mother; "it is not a dream! You have given speech to me again! O Frederic! I can tell you how much I loved you, how much I love you still. O madame! pardon me. But I feel that I shall not enjoy very long this gift that has been returned to me. What I have suffered today has exhausted my strength. I am about to die. But my son is saved. Ah! do not weep for me."

The poor victim made a great effort to pronounce these words. Her eyes grew dull; her hands were icy; already a threatening pallor overspread her features. Frederic fell on his knees beside her. Her hand was in his clasp, and he covered it with kisses. The Count had forgotten everything in his sorrow. Constance endeavored to recall her to life by reminding her of her son. Each was differently touched by this heartrending scene. Dubourg had never shed tears; but as he held the head of Sister Anne he was shaken with sobs.

"Why do you weep for me?" asked Sister Anne, making a last effort to speak. "I could not have been happy; but I die peacefully. Take care of my boy. Madame, he is fortunate in your arms. You will be his mother. Farewell, Fred-

eric! and you, his father! Oh, pardon me for having loved him!"

Sister Anne threw a last look on Constance, who pressed the little Frederic in her arms, and closed her eyes, smiling upon her son.